

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

₹ 10.00



December 2011

Vol. 116, No. 12



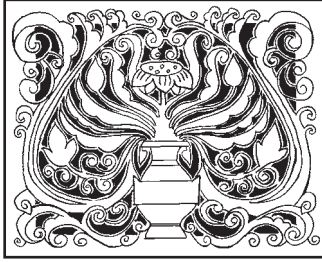
# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

Vol. 116, No. 12  
December 2011

## Contents



Amrita Kalasha

### EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prabuddha Bharata  
Advaita Ashrama  
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat  
Dt Champawat • 262 524  
Uttarakhand, India  
E-mail: prabuddhabharata@gmail.com  
pb@advaitaashrama.org

### PUBLICATION OFFICE

Advaita Ashrama  
5 Dehi Entally Road  
Kolkata • 700 014  
Tel: 91 • 33 • 2264 0898 / 2264 4000  
2286 6450 / 2286 6483  
E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org

### INTERNET EDITION AT:

www.advaitaashrama.org

Cover photo: by Nikolay Dimitrov  
(www.e-cobo.com)

Traditional Wisdom	711
This Month	712
Editorial: Breaking the Mould	713
Making Sri Ramakrishna One's Own	715
Swami Bhuteshananda	
The Divine Body of	719
Yugavatara Sri Ramakrishna	
Sudesh Garg	
Holy Mother's Concern for Common Persons	725
Swami Tathagatananda	
Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy and Work	730
Krishnakoli Bhattacharya	
Meditation in Buddhism	734
Dr Amartya Kumar Bhattacharya	
All Life is One	738
Dr Valmiki Ghosh	
Sri Ramakrishna:	743
The 'New Man' of the Age – IV	
Swami Bhajanananda	
Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels	749
Somenath Mukherjee	
Reviews	755
Reports	757

# Subscribe to Prabuddha Bharata

- Become a Patron Subscriber and support the rich legacy left to all of us by Swami Vivekananda; patrons' names are published in *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- *Prabuddha Bharata* subscribers receive 10% discount on all Advaita Ashrama Publications.
- Send remittances in favour of *Prabuddha Bharata* by bank draft or money order to Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India.  
Or, **subscribe online** at [www.advaitaashrama.org](http://www.advaitaashrama.org).
- Please note that we do not accept cheques.

<u>Subscription Rates</u>	<i>India &amp; Nepal</i>	<i>Sri Lanka &amp; Bangladesh</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>European Union</i>	<i>Other Countries</i>
Annual	₹ 100	₹ 1,100	£ 18	€ 25	\$ 30 (USD)
Three Years	₹ 280	₹ 3,200	£ 50	€ 70	\$ 85
Life (20 years)	₹ 1,200	—	—	—	—
Patron (25 years)	₹ 2,000	—	—	—	—

<u>Rates for online payment</u> at <a href="http://www.advaitaashrama.org">www.advaitaashrama.org</a> (by credit / debit card via PayPal)				
	<i>India &amp; Nepal</i>	<i>Sri Lanka &amp; Bangladesh</i>	<i>Other Countries</i>	
Annual	(USD)	\$ 3	\$ 28	\$ 32
Three Years	(USD)	\$ 7.5	\$ 83	\$ 90
Life (20 years)	(USD)	\$ 30	—	—
Patron (25 years)	(USD)	\$ 50	—	—

(Rates in foreign currencies depend on current exchange rates and are therefore subject to change without notice)

## Information for Subscribers

- Moving to a new address? Please let our Kolkata office know at least a month in advance so that your copy moves too.
- The number on the top line of your address label is your subscription number: please quote this number when writing to us. The month and year on the same line is the last month of your subscription.
- Subscriber copies are dispatched on the first or second day of every month. If you do not receive your copy by the last week of the month, please let us know so that we can send another copy.
- Renew your subscription online through our website.

## Information for Contributors

- Unpublished original articles of universal and higher human interests pertaining to religion, spirituality, philosophy, psychology, education, values, and other social topics coming from competent writers of any country are considered for publication in *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- Articles should not exceed 2,500 words. Paucity of

space precludes acceptance of longer articles for publication, except in rare cases. Articles must be submitted in typed—and preferably electronic—form.

- For all quotations in articles, adequate references—including name of author, title/publication, publisher with address, year of publication, and page number(s)—should be provided. Internet references should include name of author, website publisher, date, and *full* URL.
- The Editor does not accept responsibility for views expressed in any articles.
- Unsolicited articles are not individually acknowledged. The Editor will contact the contributor if an article is taken up for publication. E-mail addresses should be furnished where possible.
- The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject, or effect necessary changes in articles on which no correspondence is possible.
- *Prabuddha Bharata* does not undertake to return unsolicited materials.
- Articles published in *Prabuddha Bharata* cannot be reproduced elsewhere without written permission from the Managing Editor.



# You know

how important

**Prabuddha Bharata** is

in spreading the spiritual nectar of the Ramakrishna movement, the invigorating ideas of Vedanta, and the insights of Indian values and culture. *Prabuddha Bharata* also brings you inspirational reading material on a wide variety of topics of global interest.

You value this journal and the cause it represents, and would surely like to share it with others.

*How you can contribute:*

- **Gift** subscriptions to your friends and family, and encourage your thinking friends to subscribe.
- **Sponsor** a subscription for a worthy library or institution known to you, or let us choose one.
- **Contribute** to the **Prabuddha Bharata Permanent Fund** and help ensure the longevity of the journal.
- **Advertise** your company in the *Prabuddha Bharata* and encourage your colleagues to do so.



**PRABUDDHA  
BHARATA**  
or AWAKENED INDIA

*Send to:*

Advaita Ashrama  
5 Dehi Entally Road  
Kolkata 700 014

*Yes, I would like to*

- ☐ **Gift** \_\_\_\_\_ *life subscriptions to Prabuddha Bharata at ₹ 1200 each*
- ☐ **Sponsor** \_\_\_\_\_ *libraries and institutions for 20 years at ₹ 1200 each*
- ☐ **Donate** ₹ \_\_\_\_\_ *to the Prabuddha Bharata Permanent Fund*

*Amount of ₹ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed herewith by draft / money order*

PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS

*Send my gift subscriptions to:*

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

PIN \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Details of DD \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A black and white photograph showing a group of students in a library. Some are sitting at a long table, writing in notebooks, while others are standing and looking at books on shelves in the background.

SHARE YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE !

GIFT PRABUDDHA BHARATA TO LIBRARIES !

**PRABUDDHA BHARATA LIBRARY INITIATIVE**

**L**et many more benefit from the thought-provoking contents read by you every month in *Prabuddha Bharata*. Join the Prabuddha Bharata Library Initiative by gifting a life subscription to a library. You can either gift it to the library of your choice or to the library selected by us. Your name, along with the name of the library you sponsor, will be published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Come, sponsor as many libraries as you can and spread the ethos of Indian Culture.

**Prabuddha Bharata Library Initiative:**

**Name of Sponsor**

97. B. A. Prasad, Washington

98. —do—

99. —do—

**Beneficiary Library**

Bihar University Library, Bihar.

Bundelkhand University Library, Bundelkhand.

Ranchi University Library, Morabadi.

**Prabuddha Bharata Patron Subscribers:**

425. Chetan Anand, Haryana.

426. Dr. Kailash Khandelwal, Jaipur.

427. Nirjhar Ghosh , Hooghly.

***Send my gift subscriptions to:***

**PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Obituary of Swami Prameyanandaji Maharaj

It is with profound sorrow that we record the passing of Srimat Swami Prameyanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, at the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan on Thursday, 20 October 2011, at 8.25 a.m. He had been suffering from hypoxemia—low level of oxygen in the blood—for the past few months. His condition took a turn for the worse and on 9 October he was admitted to the hospital. On 17 October his condition became critical and he was put on ventilator support. The end came on 20 October.

Revered Maharaj was born in April 1933 at Dhakadakshin in Sylhet district, now in Bangladesh. Initiated by Swami Shankarananda, he joined the Order at the Karimganj centre in 1951 and was ordained into sannyasa by his guru in 1961. Just after joining the Order he participated in the relief and rehabilitation project at Cachar in Assam, from May 1951 to August 1953. Thereafter he was posted to Shillong centre, where he continued till 1960. In 1960–1 he served at Tamluk ashrama for a few months. After that he served Swami Yatiswarananda for two months. In June 1961 he was

posted to the headquarters office at Belur Math, and five years later was appointed secretary to Swami Vireswarananda, the tenth president of the Ramakrishna Order. He ably served Swami Vireswarananda for nineteen years and after the *mahasamadhi* of Swami Vireswarananda was made editor of the Order's Bengali journal *Udbodhan*. In April 1987 he was appointed a trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and a member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission, and in September of the same year he was made manager of Belur Math. In March 1997 he was elected treasurer of the twin organizations. Having served in these capacities for many years he was elected Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order in February 2009, which office he held till the end. During his spiritual ministry, he initiated many devotees in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Bangladesh. He also visited at different times Argentina, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Mauritius, Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland, the UK, Uruguay, and the US. He has two Bengali books to his credit: *Sevadarshe Ramakrishnananda*, life of Swami Ramakrishnananda, and *Puja Vijnana*, science of ritual worship.

Simple, austere, and blessed with sterling monastic qualities Swami Prameyanandaji combined in himself strict meditative habits with work efficiency. His tireless devotion to duty and meticulous adherence to monastic routine, despite failing health and advanced age, were an inspiration to all. During the two decades of exemplary service rendered as secretary to Swami Vireswarananda and his stay at Belur Math for decades in close company of exemplary senior monks, he enriched himself with the spirit and inner workings of the great traditions of the Sangha. This enabled him in later years to serve as a channel for the transmission of this spirit and knowledge to the next generation of monks and devotees who came in contact with him. In fact, over the decades he had become a reference manual, as it were, of the Belur Math traditions. His untimely demise is a great loss to the Order and has caused a void hard to fill.

His body was brought to Belur Math at about 3 p.m. on 20 October and kept in the Cultural Hall. A large number of monastics from various centres, disciples, devotees, admirers, and friends visited the Math premises on 20 October and the day after to pay their last respects and homage. On 21 at 11.40 a.m. the body was taken in a procession to the courtyard in front of the Math Office and kept on a platform for 15–20 minutes. The last rites of cremation started at 12.40 p.m. and were over by 2.45 p.m.



# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*



## *The Inscrutable Reality*

December 2011

Vol. 116, No. 12

न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।  
हृदा हृदिस्थं मनसा य एनमेवं विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

His form does not exist within the range of vision; nobody sees this One with the eye. Those who thus know this One as existing in the heart, through a pure intellect and mind, they become immortal.

(*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 4.20)

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथाऽरसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।  
अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं निचाय्य तन्मृत्युमुखात् प्रमुच्यते ॥

One becomes freed from the jaws of death by knowing That which is soundless, touchless, colourless, undiminishing, and also tasteless, eternal, odourless, without beginning and without end, distinct from Mahat, and ever constant.

(*Katha Upanishad*, 1.3.15)

यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम् ।  
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

That which a person does not comprehend with the mind and by which, they [the knowers of Brahman] say, the mind is encompassed, know that to be Brahman and not what people worship as an object.

(*Kena Upanishad*, 1.6)

असन्नेव स भवति । असद्ब्रह्मेति वेद चेत् ।  
अस्ति ब्रह्मेति चेद्वेद । सन्तमेनं ततो विदुरिति ॥

If anyone knows Brahman as non-existing, he himself becomes non-existent. If anyone knows that Brahman does exist, then they [the knowers of Brahman] consider him as existing by virtue of that (knowledge).

(*Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.6.1)

# THIS MONTH

The mental mould in which we are bound lies within the larger mould of nature's external bondage. Through appropriate perceptual changes we can emerge to the light of freedom by **Breaking the Mould**.



For devotees of Sri Ramakrishna to reflect his life and teachings is the goal, but superficially knowing him will not help. Swami Bhuteshananda, who was the twelfth president of the Ramakrishna Order, teaches us how to commence

## **Making Sri Ramakrishna One's Own.**

Sudesh Garg, a devotee from Ambala, conceptualizes the five basic elements of Sri Ramakrishna's body through a supernal vision in **The Divine Body of Yugavatara Sri Ramakrishna**.

Swami Tathagatananda, head of the Vedanta Society of New York, shows in the first part of his article how **Holy Mother's Concern for Common Persons** went beyond the ordinary to the Divine.

**Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy and Work** was to show humankind's true universal dimension. This article is presented by Krishnakoli Bhattacharya, who is a lecturer in philosophy at Derozio Memorial College, Kolkata.



Meditation forms the heart of Buddhism and of almost every Eastern spiritual sadhana. Dr Amartya Kumar Bhattacharya, an ardent Buddhist and engineer, takes us through the process and philosophy of *vipashyana* in **Meditation in Buddhism**.



Dr Valmiki Ghosh, DPhil, University of Oxford, and professor of English literature has books and stories published in the UK and the US. From the standpoint of science and Vedanta he affirms that **All Life is One**.



Swami Bhajanananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, indicates in the last part of **Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – IV** how Sri Ramakrishna strengthened the world's moral foundations of culture and spirituality.

In the second part of **Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels** Somnath Mukherjee, Researcher, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, presents Swamiji's travels on the ships *Empress of India* and *La Touraine*.





## EDITORIAL

# ***Breaking the Mould***

**H**UMANS HAVE COME UP with scores of explanations regarding the world they are born, live, and die in. However, the short road of human history is littered with scores of old discarded theories. With a quantum leap in knowledge there are no simple questions and answers regarding the world today. But one thing is clear and indisputable: everything, from the biggest galaxy to the smallest biological cell, goes through the process of birth, growth, and death. One can add many subsidiary stages to this cycle, but they do not alter these basic facts, as almost all human knowledge is a quest within it.

There are two forces behind these processes spanning the microcosm and the macrocosm. Swami Vivekananda teaches: 'Two forces seem to be working throughout nature. One of these is constantly differentiating, and the other as constantly unifying. ... It seems that the action of these two forces enters into every department of nature and of human life.' This universe is the colossal battleground of these two forces on every level of existence. At one end of this spectrum the action is visible and violent, and at the other end the work is unobtrusive. Solid matter seems to be their plaything creating planets, galaxies, bodies, and minds. Shifting perception from matter to the two forces would give us the idea that the constant collision between them *creates* matter, which accounts for the whole panorama of the seen and unseen universe. A shift in perception means breaking a mental mould to emerge into a greater understanding and freedom.

Though the explanation of two forces colliding to create the universe sounds terrible, it is nonetheless elegant and therefore attractive. But subscribing to it implies still being trapped in the old duality mould that the world has laboured under for so long, from religion to mechanistic and reductionistic explanation of things, to the mind and body being separate, and so on. This elegance therefore has to be sacrificed for the explanation of a one force idea, because having two causes for the universe is naive. Besides, two forces would always give place to the human peculiarity of labelling one good and the other bad.

This single force has to be in constant motion; when one speaks of it as a force, it has to have motion as an essential quality, otherwise it would not be a force. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'Whenever you see actions like creation, preservation, dissolution, there is the manifestation of Shakti.' In this force are included all the gross and subtle levels—whether we want to conceptualize the force as tapering or spiral, flat or round, it does not matter. The important idea is that both unity and diversity can be obtained from this unique force. When we say all life is one, or all matter is fundamentally the same, or all matter is but energy condensed, we are speaking of unity and diversity belonging to this one force. Hindus have conceptualized this force as Divine Mother.

Now that we can comprehend the magnitude of the one force having full sway in creating systems after systems in the universe, we need another perceptual change regarding it. This very force also goes through the stages of evolution

and involution, over and over again. This vast and seemingly timeless force, which has staggering dimensions, is mutable, as it also goes through constant transformation. And all motion, it must be remembered, follows a circular pattern. In fact, if this force does not transform, then it would cease to exist.


One thing is clear in every mind: that the perception of change and motion implies changelessness and immobility. Human minds are constituted to grasp this abstract conception. From it follows the feeling of being changeless in the midst of change, of being free though bound, of being significant while living insignificant lives. Some ancient philosophers have said that motion and change itself gave rise to the illusion of no motion and change. From a particular perspective a speeding object appears stationary. But the question is why do contradictory ideas arise simultaneously? Then, who are we and what are we supposed to do? Are we to live in a schizophrenic world like schizophrenics? Is this the goal? This cannot be perfection.

Swamiji shows how the contradictory ideas operate so that we can break through this mental mould. 'You can think of limited space, but that very idea gives you also unlimited space. Close your eyes and think of a little space; at the same time that you perceive the little circle, you have a circle round it of unlimited dimensions. It is the same with time. Try to think of a second; you will have, with the same act of perception, to think of time which is unlimited. So with knowledge. Knowledge is only a germ in man, but you will have to think of infinite knowledge around it, so that the very constitution of our mind shows us that there is unlimited knowledge, and the Yogis call that unlimited knowledge God.'

The understanding of this mental constitution now calls for another shift in perception. The one force is called maya in Indian religion

and metaphysics. This maya is called Shakti, the power of God. The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* says: 'One should know that nature is surely maya and the supreme Lord is the Ruler of maya, to be sure.' We have arrived so far, yet we are not able to extricate ourselves from the duality of God and maya. But Sri Ramakrishna teaches: 'Brahman and Shakti are identical, like fire and its power to burn. ... If you accept the one you must accept the other.' 'He who is attributeless also has attributes. ... When thought of as inactive, He is called Brahman, and when thought of as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer, He is called the Primordial Energy, Kali.'

Maya, described as a great wonder and indescribable, makes the impossible possible and vice versa; it also deludes, bewitches, tosses us around, and finally frees those who struggle to realize God. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'God has covered all with His maya. He does not let us know anything. ... He who puts maya aside to see God can see Him.' We are bound in a network of memories, thoughts, feelings, fancies, identities, relationships, culture, language, and a host of other things. We keep spinning round in this bondage repeatedly, birth after birth, through ignorance blundering about, calling the world dead dull matter, and wanting to enjoy it. Maya then puts us through endless troubles to wake us up.

Struggling against impossible odds brings about a shift in perception regarding Reality, then that very maya, called Divine Mother, the power of God, reveals her benevolent aspect and extricates us by incarnating as an avatara. Sri Ramakrishna, the avatara of this age, who gave simple answers to every complex problem, says about himself: 'God is born on earth as man in every age.' The life and message of an avatara burns away the dross of ignorance and transforms our perceptions to realize that we, the universe, and God are in reality one. 

# ***Making Sri Ramakrishna One's Own***

**Swami Bhuteshananda**

**A**LL OVER THE WORLD there is an awakening, an eagerness to understand Sri Ramakrishna from various angles. His advent as an avatara has indeed not been in vain. However, we have not been able to fully fathom Sri Ramakrishna because we have not as yet reached the desired spiritual depth in our own lives. Thus, it is time now for his devotees to practise a little self-analysis. Such introspection will make us see actually how much we have been able to establish Sri Ramakrishna in our lives, not just externally, but within our inner selves, and how far have we progressed towards achieving this goal. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that while winnowing the chaff from the rice grains the farmers at times pick up the grains to check how clean it is. Likewise, we too should pause and gauge the progress we are making towards purity, unselfishness, and love for God. Only verbal acclamations will not suffice. We must, in each step of our lives, live Sri Ramakrishna totally. The more we learn to love him, the greater will our lifestyle be shaped by his influence.

## ***Magic Touch of an Avatara***

We know from a person's behaviour how cultured or uncultured the person is. So those who claim to adore or love Sri Ramakrishna should always remember their spiritual lineage and be careful not to stumble and fall. In the Bhagavata it has been said that those who depend on God can run blindfolded without ever falling. Their very nature becomes such that it is impossible for them to do anything reprehensible. Sri Ramakrishna used to give the example of the

philosopher's stone, which would change a steel sword to a golden one; the shape of the sword would still remain as before, but it could no longer be used to wound or kill.

The touch of that magic stone can transform us also. But if we do not turn into gold, then it must be assumed that we never actually made the contact. Looking deep within ourselves the actual truth will have to be divined. In the Bhagavata the gopis are found searching everywhere in the forest for Sri Krishna. They do not know where he is. One of them said that he must have passed this way, for the fragrance of his person still lingers here. The wind vibrates with the passing touch of the Lord. The significance is that if once we have been blessed with even an iota of that divine presence, then our inner selves will become purified. But if that does not happen, then it has to be admitted that no matter how loudly we proclaim our credentials, in reality Sri Ramakrishna's light has not lit the lamp in our hearts. It is but rare that the world witnesses the advent of one like Sri Ramakrishna, and we are still so close to that great chapter in time. Only a hundred and twenty-five years or so have passed since he gave up his physical body. Thus, if we, grovelling in the mire of mundane existence, fail to feel that saving grace, then it must be that the advent of that great incarnation has been futile. It is our great good fortune to have been born in this age, in which the horizon still radiates with the glow of Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna does not belong to history or to mythology. Even today that magic touch is still very close to us, very clear, and very sharp.



Despite this, if our lives do not become more illumined, more pure, and more intense in its passionate search for God, then his very birth in this age will have been in vain.

Is it not rather unfortunate that he was born here, lived here, and yet he is being evaluated by people from so many distant lands, while we remain ignorant? The space below the lantern remains in darkness while the lamp lights up the road in front; similarly, we are close to him and yet we are in the dark. Why am I referring to it as darkness? Have we really been able to know him properly and come close to him? Here, at this juncture, it is time for us to pause and ponder. The doctor is there and the medicines are there, but if the patient refuses to comply, will the disease be cured? The situation here is similar. The current of Sri Ramakrishna's vibrations swell and rise all around, but we remain thirsty sitting by the shore of that mighty ocean of nectar. It has therefore to be reluctantly admitted that his influence in our lives is far less than what it should have been.

The saviour does not come for the few, he comes for all. Destiny frames the hour of his arrival, but its effect is far-reaching. Is it only in pride that we proclaim Sri Ramakrishna was a son of the soil? It is time to measure out how much we have been affected in proportion to this proximity. In order to show respect to Sri Ramakrishna we must match the rhythm of our lives to his music and dive deep into the ocean of his thoughts. But how far have we been able to do that? Not very far. This is because our wish to do so lacks intensity and sincerity. We pay homage to him in the usual run-of-the-mill manner, but we are unable to receive him from the very bottom of our hearts.

### **Shaping Ourselves First**

We must first shape and cast our lives into his mould. Usually we rush forward to teach and

rectify and transform others, without first seeing whether our hearts and minds are properly purified and tuned. Swami Vivekananda used to say that if the ghost is in the mustard seeds, then how can those seeds be used to exorcise the evil spirit? In the Bible Christ speaks in a similar vein and warns us against the person who is trying to cleanse a speck from another's eye while his own eye is blinded with a beam. First make your own vision whole before seeing the faults of others. Without this self-analysis all our endeavours to be saved will be wasted.

While we acknowledge Sri Ramakrishna to be the avatara of this age who has come to bless humankind, let us at least see whether we are worthy to receive his gospel. Thousands come to be initiated and take his name. But all are silent when I ask if they have read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. We have not even perused this wonderful book, which in simple language satisfies the hunger of the learned as well as that of the ordinary person. Perhaps we have framed Sri Ramakrishna's photograph and regularly offer flowers to it. But have we cared to take to heart his message? How can we put into practice the advice that we have not even read? If such is the case with us, then how can we claim to be his devotees? In reply to my queries about the *Gospel* many say that they do not have the time to read it. It seems there is time for everything except for getting inspired by such thoughts. We are averse to his name. It is not just the phonetic symbol and pronunciation that I am referring to here, what I mean is the thoughts that are symbolized by that name. A person once told Sri Ramakrishna that he did not want knowledge but only pure devotion. Sri Ramakrishna replied that if you do not know your beloved, how is it possible for you to love him? Without forming some sort of an idea of him, how can we become his devotees? All that we know about him is his name and that many are attracted by it. How does

that influence my life? This has to be pondered over and mused upon, again and again.

Many come to me seeking initiation. Amongst them how many are acquainted with the significance of Sri Ramakrishna's drift of thought? Upon being questioned about what they have read, they usually reply that they know only fictional books on Sri Ramakrishna. And yet they are not thirsty to understand the person and the facts behind the fiction. They are familiar only with some bits and pieces of the *Gospel*. Why only these small portions? 'Do you not like reading the book?' 'Very much,' they say. 'Then why have you not gone through the whole book?' 'Household chores are so demanding! Where is the time?' Perhaps that person knows all about the various movies and every detail of the film stars. But none has time to know about Sri Ramakrishna! I am not hinting at any one in particular, but I make these comments in deep sorrow. Initiation and devotion to Sri Ramakrishna are the props that will support our lives. But have we arranged the brick and mortar mixture that will bind the supporting wall? Otherwise, what support shall we have? Often has Sri Ramakrishna asked us to hold firmly to God with one hand and work for our mundane life with the other. Notice that he did not ask us to hold either to God or to the empirical world with both hands. He did not demand that the entire country should become a land of hermits. In fact, we know that he himself had admonished some persons to go back home and care for parents, wives, and children.

The pivot of his own life was none other than God. Repeatedly he had declared: 'Verily I tell you that apart from God I know nothing else.' This conviction of his had shaped his entire life and he held it up before us as an example in order to influence our existence in this world. He lived his life exclusively for the welfare of others. We may notice that when the bliss of samadhi was

about to sweep him out of ordinary consciousness, Sri Ramakrishna had cried out to the Divine Mother: 'Mother do not let me totally lose consciousness. I want to communicate with the devotees.' For their sake he would ignore his body and even the ecstasies of samadhi. Then again, when his favourite disciple Narendra wanted to immerse himself in the bliss of samadhi, Sri Ramakrishna reprimanded him: 'What do you say! I had thought you would become like a giant banyan under whose shade the weary travellers would rest. Instead you are thinking of your own bliss?' To Sri Ramakrishna it was a grave wrong to forget the sufferings of people who, having forgotten God, are scorched day and night by the trivialities of petty worldly existence. The last days of Sri Ramakrishna's life was dedicated to these unfortunate beings. He said: 'This body has never been impure. Then, why is it suffering? I have taken on the heavy load of the innumerable sinners who come to me.' The austerities that he underwent were not for his own benefit.


There are many who, as a result of following just one path and having tasted just a little of the fruits of their sadhana, remain immersed in that intoxicating joy. But Sri Ramakrishna, after having experimented with different disciplines one by one, showed the path to realization to the followers of those disciplines. He tasted new faiths again and again because he had a pressing desire to know for himself through what eyes others looked at the Divine Mother. He wanted to know the angle of vision of the Muslims, the Christians, and all the various Hindu sects. He wished to eradicate from their minds all kinds of religious fanaticism bred on ignorance and difference of opinions, which ultimately lead to loss of peace. From his life and teachings, Sri Ramakrishna wanted the world to know that consciously or unconsciously all are seeking the one supreme Truth.

It is not possible to show another person, apart from Sri Ramakrishna, who has held up his life before the world in such a living example. Usually a person is seen to follow a particular course in his life, through which he reaches a marked goal. There the matter ends. But in Sri Ramakrishna's life it was different. Various streams of thought mingled in him. Not by imagination, not by perception, but by direct experience Sri Ramakrishna was able to uphold Reality in such a clear manner. Often it has been cited that the scriptures, especially Hindu scriptures, are catholic and broad in content. Despite this, there are countless strong differences leading to clashes amongst Hindus as also with others. But Sri Ramakrishna, by treading these various paths, showed that all the streams flow into the one ocean of God.

Why was it necessary for him to observe the austerities for such a considerable length of time?

Even after that initial phase of tapasya we find that he gave each drop of his blood for the good of man; although torn by disease and wracked by shattered health, he did not cease to make the maximum use of the time left to him. When Buddha was laid down to rest on the last lap of his life's journey, he noticed in the distance that someone had come for his instruction. Buddha's disciples told that seeker that it was too late, for Buddha was now nearing his end and preparing for *pari-nirvana*. But even in that condition Buddha said: 'Ananda, bring to me that seeker.' Buddha wanted to let the last draught of his breath be spent in the service of even a single soul. A parallel can be drawn between the last days of Buddha and those of Sri Ramakrishna; Sri Ramakrishna too had exhausted himself for the well-being of the world.

But alas! Witnessing this divine play from so close a range we are still unaffected. Blind to the plight of our immediate neighbours, indifferent to the widening gap between the vulgar opulence of some and the grinding poverty of others, spiritual insight remains a distant dream for us. How is such a thing possible in this land of Sri Ramakrishna, whose heart throbbed with the cries of his countrymen? We claim to be his devotees and yet how mute and cold we remain to the sufferings of others. Sri Ramakrishna has bequeathed an all-embracing ideal, which everybody can follow. It is beneficial alike to the monk and the householder, the rich and the poor, the unlettered and the learned.

Thus, the main thing to be done is to exercise self-analysis and see that although we have been fortunate to be close to Sri Ramakrishna, how much of his light have we been able to actually reflect and how much have we been able to cast our lives in the mould he has left for us. This introspection must be followed by an ardent effort to imbibe Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and life. He is the means. He is the end. 





# The Divine Body of Yugavatara Sri Ramakrishna

Sudesh Garg

THE PRIMAL PURUSHA, designated in Hinduism as Brahman—the absolute, the infinite, the fathomless, beyond the senses, eternal, and the essence of consciousness—has condensed, embodied into a tangible human form, and descended on this planet in the modern age as Sri Ramakrishna to take people drowning in the dark ocean of ignorance to a safe shore.

## Humanly Divine

Sri Ramakrishna lived and behaved like any ordinary man, bearing the pleasures and pains of the body, laughing, joking, and making merry with devotees. Day after day devotees saw him losing himself in rapturous ecstasies and becoming still in samadhi, with a bewitching smile on his lips, his countenance radiating bliss, his half-closed eyes gazing, as it were, into the Reality within, and his body assuming an ethereal glow. They listened with fascination to the words of God-realization that came from his lips. They watched his celestial dance. Like a child he talked to the Divine Mother, making importunate demands on her. They learnt about his burning realizations, his visions and experiences during his period of sadhana. There was such an amount of *sattva-guna* in him that he could not bear the slightest touch of impurity or vibration of worldly thought. Worldly talk burnt his ears. If he happened to touch metal plates or pots, his hand ached as if stung by a horned fish; what to say of contact with gold ornaments or silver coins! On the other hand,

by his mere touch he would redeem those past redemption, turn scoffers into devotees, wash away all blemishes from an aspirant's mind, awaken people's spiritual consciousness, and even bestow God-vision or samadhi.

When Sri Ramakrishna returned from his absorption in the great communion with God, he viewed the phenomenal world with a new 'spiritual eye'. It appeared to him that the universe was soaked, as it were, in the bliss of God. No place was bereft of the consciousness of Brahman. A dirty place was as good as the bank of the sacred Ganga. It was the same eternal Consciousness that gleamed through an aristocrat or a scavenger, a majestic elephant or an ant, a ferocious tiger or a fish, a lofty mountain or a shoreless ocean, a speck of dust or a droplet of water; for him nothing existed except God. He looked upon all women as the images of the Divine Mother, knelt to worship even prostitutes, addressed the actresses at the Star Theatre as 'my blissful mothers'. His relation with his consort Sarada Devi was beyond the physical level; it was the mystical union between Shiva and Shakti—the one Reality manifesting as the masculine and as the feminine energies of transcendence and immanence.

Ah! The devotees wondered who that divine being was, seated before them as their Master. Swami Vivekananda said: 'In Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa the man was all dead and only God remained.'<sup>1</sup> It was as if the body had ceased to be and only the spirit remained. And whatever

remained of his body was a mere shell that performed every action at the bidding of the indwelling Divine Mother. His mind was hardly attached to even that body, preserved only to enjoy the bliss of God and the company of devotees. Sri Ramakrishna's body was a mere sheath to cover that divine effulgence of which it was made, the divine effulgence seen by his mother Chandramani Devi radiating from a Shiva temple and merging into her womb; that boundless, infinite, conscious sea of light that Sri Ramakrishna saw when he experienced his first vision of the Divine Mother; that homogeneous mass of light of the 'abode of the indivisible' that solidified and converted into the form of a divine child, as narrated by Sri Ramakrishna himself. In his exalted states of mind that divine light within radiated outside. Finally, whatever remained of his body—the gross body that he called a mere pillow-case, a mere cage of flesh and blood—had ceased to be, giving place to his divine body, the *bhagavati tanu*, through which he communed with the Paramatman. The five elements which the gross body is made of were all divinized in his case. Let us take a brief look at his divinized elements.

### Earth

Patient and forbearing like Mother Earth, who bears so much of warfare, bloodshed, crime, and violence in her bosom, was Sri Ramakrishna. His motherly solicitude encompassed all in its cosmic sweep, even the worst of sinners. 'His [Sri Ramakrishna's] longing was for the salvation of every soul in a whole world. A universe from which one, most insignificant, was missing, could not have seemed perfect in his eyes. ... Only such love deserves the name of God the Mother.'<sup>2</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna's unbounded grace fell on the hypercritical Hazra and the lowly Rasik alike.

Both died peacefully in full consciousness, visualizing his presence. The overwhelming intensity of his love transformed the lives of many sceptics, bohemians, and drunkards. Girish Ghosh said: 'He literally accepted my sins and left my soul free. ... To this redeemer of my soul I have paid little homage. In a drunken state I have abused him. When given the opportunity to serve him, I have ignored it. But I have no regrets. In my attempts to escape all discipline I found myself disciplined without knowing it. Such is my guru's grace—an infinite ocean of mercy, not conferred because of merit, nor withheld because of sin, but lavished on saint and sinner alike.'<sup>3</sup>

Not only did Sri Ramakrishna take upon himself the burden of human frailties and iniquities, but in his all-transcending love he bore upon his own body the sufferings of other's diseases. Once Jagadamba Dasi, Mathur's wife, had an attack of dysentery. It worsened so much that the doctors gave up all hope for her life. Extremely anxious Mathur beseeched Sri Ramakrishna's help. Sri Ramakrishna entered into an ecstatic state and granted his prayer. Jagadamba Dasi gradually came round, but as a consequence Sri Ramakrishna had to suffer from dysentery and other diseases for six months.

Sri Ramakrishna loved all beings as manifestations of the one indivisible Consciousness, which he called Ma, and all women were to him the living embodiments of the Divine Mother. He said that he could not bear to see them suffer. Once two women visited him; they had fasted in honour of their visit to that illumined soul. Sri Ramakrishna requested his nephew Ramalal to feed them with fruits, sweets, drinks, and other offerings from the temple. He felt relieved only after they had eaten. In spite of her unchaste lifestyle, he blessed the actress Binodini with the words 'mother, be illumined'—she had played the role of Chaitanya in a play of Girish Ghosh.

One day Sri Ramakrishna saw in a vision his subtle body coming out of his gross body. It was covered with sores, especially in the region of the throat. Sri Ramakrishna explained that people who had committed evil deeds had become pure by touching him, and the burden of their sins had been transferred to him. He underwent a kind of crucifixion again and again to relieve others of their sins and miseries. Some of the devotees thought that they no longer would touch the holy person of the Master. But on 1 January 1886 Sri Ramakrishna blessed the devotees present by touching each of them. At his hallowed touch they were transported to a sublime spiritual state. They bowed down and took the dust of his feet.

They forgot time and space, forgot the disease of the Master and forgot their previous determination not to touch him till he recovered, and were aware only that out of sympathy for them in their plight, an extraordinary divine Being, feeling excruciating pain at their misery and his heart overflowing with compassion, had come down to them from heaven and called them affectionately to Him for giving protection, like a mother sheltering her children against all ills.<sup>4</sup>

His loving arms, graceful like lotus stalks, stretched to all humankind. The fallen, the afflicted, and the spiritually thirsty found refuge at his feet.

### Water

Sri Ramakrishna, though being the ocean of Satchidananda, has appeared as a huge wave of divine form to demonstrate to agonized humanity that by plunging into the depths of that ocean, the fish of the human soul can swim joyfully in immortal bliss. He was the unfathomable and shoreless ocean in which infinite spiritual

ideals of various sects and creeds and religious traditions are engulfed in a unique synthesis, a synthesis that also retains their individual characteristics. A boundless, unmotivated ocean of mercy, brimming with love and pouring its waters of grace on burning souls seared in the furnace of the world. He was an ocean of inexhaustible virtues where we can swim and thereby obtain divine wisdom and pure love.

Sri Ramakrishna was a fount of love, which gushes forth in thousands of streams and moistens our arid souls parched by the flames of passions. He was the river of *karamnasha*; those who jump into its waters put an end to their duties in the world. A veritable river of love in which one can throw one's limited ego and lower passions, and yet that river would remain tranquil, unruffled, and unpolluted, incessantly raising on its surface rapturous waves of ecstatic love.

### Fire

The yearning for God-vision manifested in Sri Ramakrishna even in his childhood. And at the age of twenty, when he was engaged as a priest in the Kali temple of Dakshineswar, the fire of his longing for God, which had been smouldering within, burst into flames. He was like a soul on fire, tortured by the painful want of seeing the living form of the Divine Mother—seeing her only in the image did not satisfy him. Describing his pain of separation from the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna said: "The burning pain that one feels when one is separated from God is not an ordinary feeling. It is said that the fire of this anguish in Rupa and Sanatana scorched the leaves of the tree under which they sat. I was unconscious three days in that state. I couldn't move. I lay in one place. ... The earth that had stuck to my body while I was lying on the ground had become baked."<sup>5</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna's painful want was satisfied



when he had his first vision of the Divine Mother as a luminous sea of light. Now his yearning to experience Reality in all forms and aspects drove him forth to his supreme quest. The unprecedented and severe austerities he performed for twelve long years culminated in a realization so profound that no one was able to resist, no one was able to escape the fire of his divine consciousness. He passed this God-intoxicating intensity to his intimate disciples who renounced their homes and relatives and took the vow of service of God in man. All others who came under his influence also had their dormant spark of divinity kindled. Listening to his soul-stirring songs even pandits like Shashadhar shed tears of joy. His all-consuming fire of divine love cast a spell on the Brahmos as well. Wrote Pratap Chandra Mazumdar:

What is there in common between him [Sri Ramakrishna] and me? I, a Europeanized, civilized, self-centred, semi-sceptical, so called educated reasoner, and he a poor, illiterate, unpolished, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee? Why should I sit long hours to attend to him—I who have listened to ... a whole host of European scholars and divines? ... Why should I be spellbound to hear him? And it is not I only, but dozens like me who are the same. ... His whole nature burns day and night with a permanent fire and fever of a strange faith and feeling. His conversation is a ceaseless breaking forth of his inward fire.<sup>6</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna often told the devotees to burn the thorn of ignorance in the fire of knowledge. 'I had direct vision of those things. One day I was passing back of the kuthi when my whole body burst into flames as it were, like the fire in a homa.'<sup>7</sup> By just approaching this blazing fire of divine knowledge all one's dross like jealousy, anger, malice, hatred, attachment, and delusion are consumed.

### **Air**

Like the air, which carries both good and bad smells but itself remains unaffected, was Sri Ramakrishna, a free soul indifferent to virtue and vice, health and disease, honour and ignominy. Just as a windstorm blows away trees and huts, the storm of his divine frenzy blew away his sacred thread, the cloth on his body, and all trace of his individual 'I'. When a devotee told him that Keshab Sen had said that he was 'the Chaitanya of the nineteenth century', Sri Ramakrishna simply remarked: 'What of it? Can you tell me how my arm can be cured' (422). On another occasion, when Ram told him that the editor of a newspaper had been abusing him, he only replied: 'Suppose he was. What does it matter?' (497-8). How easily could he detach his mind from the excruciating pain he was suffering due to cancer! No temptation of money, expensive shawls, favourite sweets, or sex pleasure could deflect his mind from the ideal.

Unlike an ordinary religious teacher who is conceited due to his learning, unapproachable, with a haughty air about him, particular about his external insignia, strict observer of caste and food, what need had Sri Ramakrishna to make a show of piety by wearing an ochre robe, matted hair, wooden sandals, and a tilak on his forehead? Without any outer indication of holiness the inscrutable acted within him, manifesting the mysterious power of the omnipotent.

The free soul that he was, Sri Ramakrishna could roam about unselfconsciously, with a bamboo stick on his shoulders; could eat cooked greens sent by the wife of a low-caste man; could be frivolous like a teenager and joke and make merry with the youngsters; could rush to see the flood tide without bothering to put on his clothes; could chastise Rani Rasmani by slapping her and remain calm and poised in the Self; could speak the truth and point out to

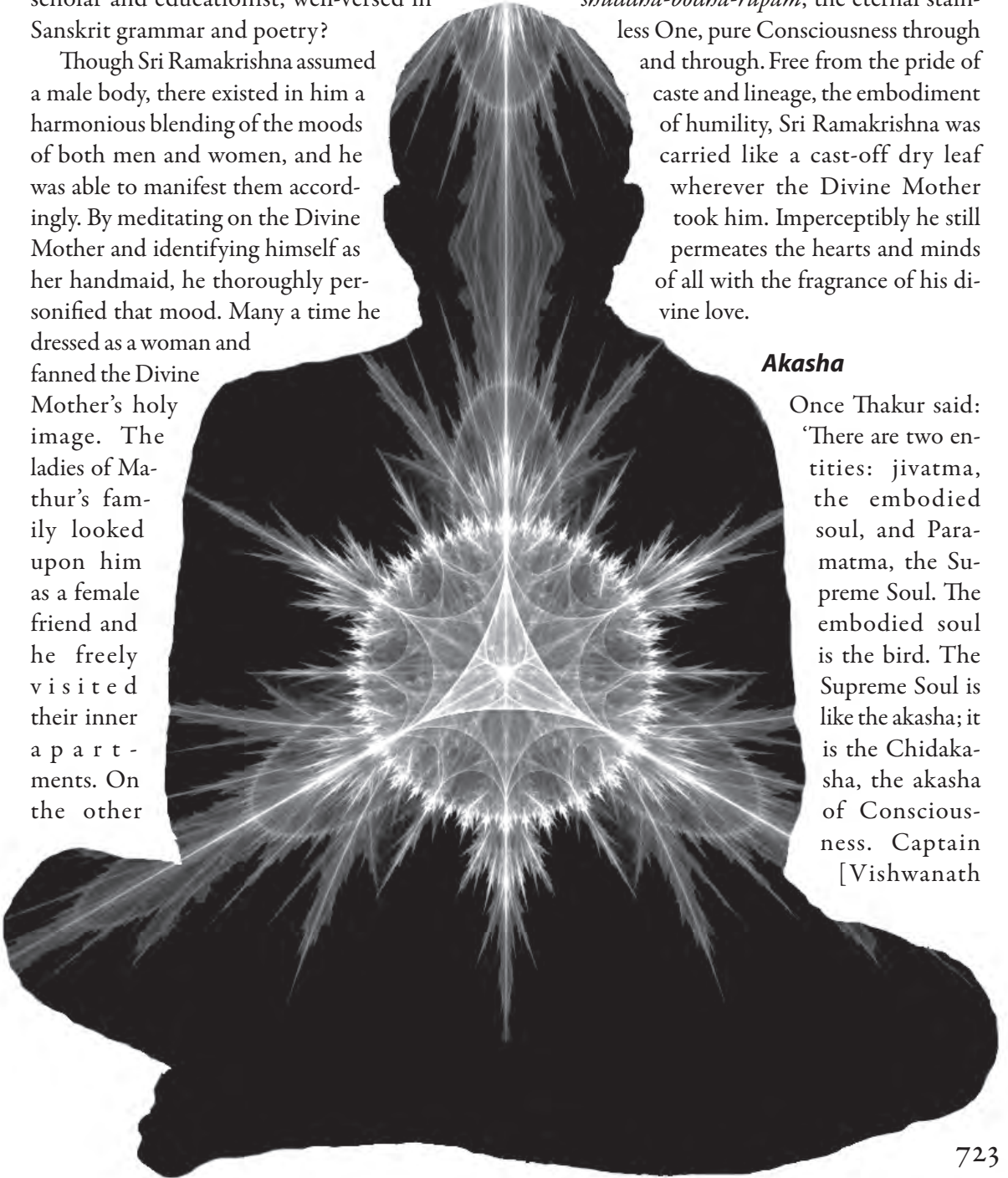
men of high position their follies. What mattered to him if the devotees saw him naked as a child pacing his room, repeating the names of gods and goddesses, or if his shirt was unbuttoned while visiting Vidyasagar—a great scholar and educationist, well-versed in Sanskrit grammar and poetry?

Though Sri Ramakrishna assumed a male body, there existed in him a harmonious blending of the moods of both men and women, and he was able to manifest them accordingly. By meditating on the Divine Mother and identifying himself as her handmaid, he thoroughly personified that mood. Many a time he dressed as a woman and fanned the Divine Mother's holy image. The ladies of Mathur's family looked upon him as a female friend and he freely visited their inner apartments. On the other

hand, learned scholars would be surprised to hear his words of profound wisdom. And his mind was also able to merge into the Mahavayu when he was neither male nor female but the bodiless Self, which is of the nature of *nitya-shuddha-bodha-rupam*, the eternal stainless One, pure Consciousness through and through. Free from the pride of caste and lineage, the embodiment of humility, Sri Ramakrishna was carried like a cast-off dry leaf wherever the Divine Mother took him. Imperceptibly he still permeates the hearts and minds of all with the fragrance of his divine love.

### Akasha


Once Thakur said: 'There are two entities: jivatma, the embodied soul, and Paramatma, the Supreme Soul. The embodied soul is the bird. The Supreme Soul is like the akasha; it is the Chidakasha, the akasha of Consciousness. Captain [Vishwanath



Upadhyaya] said: “Your embodied soul flies into the akasha of Consciousness. Thus you go into samadhi!” (784–5). Even in the state of normal consciousness Sri Ramakrishna’s mind never descended to the three lower planes. When conscious of the world around him, he only sang or talked of God or chanted Hari’s name; in a state of semi-consciousness he danced lost in the ecstasy of divine love, and in the inmost state his mind completely merged into the Mahakarana, the realm of the Indivisible. His mind constantly ascended from the lila, relative, to the *nitya*,

Absolute, and descended again from the *nitya* to the lila. It ran a boat race, as it were, between the sixth and the seventh planes.

Uttering the words ‘Ma’ or ‘Om’; hearing devotional songs or hymns; contemplating the dark night of the new moon, associated with the complexion of Ma Kali; or even seeing at the zoo a lion, which is the carrier of the Divine Mother, his mind used to merge into the realm of Chidakasha. There the noise of the world no longer exists, only a sweet tranquillity and inner silence remains. The universe in space dissolves. The mind completely takes the form of pure Consciousness and one cannot utter a word. Thakur forced his mind to come down to narrate his spiritual experiences, to open the devotees’ eyes for illumination.

Unfathomable; beyond measure! Who can find the end of his virtues? Yet, by meditating on the *rupa*, divine form, of Yugavatara Sri Ramakrishna his *svarupa*, real nature, is revealed—he who assumes various forms for the delight of his bhaktas and is also the formless Reality, the indivisible light of pure Consciousness. 

## References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 7.85.
2. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, 5 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2006), 1.486.
3. *Ramakrishna as We Saw Him*, ed. and trans. Swami Chetanananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1993) 338–9.
4. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, trans. Swami Jagadananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2010), 1268.
5. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 747.
6. *Ramakrishna as We Saw Him*, 385–6.
7. *Gospel*, 868.

**O**n hearing about the statue [of Sri Ramakrishna] from Swami Saradananda, [Raja] Maharaj kept silent for a while and then asked: ‘Sarat, which figure of the Master should I approve? Even on the same day I saw the Master in many forms. Sometimes one would find him lean and emaciated, sitting silently in a corner. Again, after some time one would notice him singing kirtans, all the time clapping his hands, totally forgetful of his body and dress. Sometimes he would be lost in deep samadhi; then there would be a wonderful expression in his face, which beamed with celestial bliss, while his body radiated a divine light. At times he would be found to possess a stature much taller and stronger than the usual one and move from one end of the southern portico to the other with big steps.’

Swami Saradananda replied humbly: ‘Maharaj, I mean that particular figure of the Master which he himself said would be worshipped in every house. You are to approve the model of that form.’

Maharaj, with a smiling face, replied, ‘All right, I shall go.’

—Swami Chetanananda,  
*Ramakrishna as we Saw Him*, 459

# ***Holy Mother's Concern for Common Persons***

**Swami Tathagatananda**

**A**LTHOUGH THE LIFE of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi appears quite ordinary in its rustic setting, it is wholly extraordinary. The limited human intellect cannot understand her, whose life was above and beyond the human plane. Holy Mother is the pitcher of infinite bliss that pours divine love upon all. She is the embodiment of the divine grace that grants liberation.

## ***Her Nature***

Holy Mother constantly avowed her divinity through her actions and on several occasions declared it. Sri Ramakrishna worshipped her as the Divine Mother in the form of Shodashi and told others that she was the embodiment of Saraswati, the goddess of learning. A few days before this worship the Master gave her an instruction that made a powerful impact on her mind: 'The moon is addressed as "uncle" by all children. So also God is the "Uncle", the common property, of all. Everyone has a right to call on Him. Whoever thus calls on Him becomes blessed by realizing Him. If you, therefore, turn your attention to Him, you too can attain Him.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Sarada Devi became the 'Mother Moon', as it were, of all, the just and the unjust, the evildoers and the doers of good alike. Still, Holy Mother hid her sublime nature and kept herself humble in order that people could easily approach her and she could serve them. She dedicated her life to remove human ignorance.

Her fluid divine nature gave her an infinite

capacity to accommodate herself to every person and to all situations. Like the rays of the sun, which shine upon everyone, no one was rejected from Mother's divine love and compassion. There was not the slightest trace of pride or assertiveness in her. She was the embodiment of purity, love, unselfishness, humility, chastity, modesty, sweetness, tenderness, devotion, and worshipful service to Sri Ramakrishna. She served him with her whole life. The Master had a clear idea of her spiritual ministry and prepared her for her future work. One day at Kashipur, towards the end of his life, the Master said to Mother: 'Well, my dear, won't you do anything? Should this (pointing to his body) do everything single-handed?' Mother replied: 'I am a woman. What can I do?' The Master said: 'No, no. You'll have to do a lot.'<sup>2</sup>

In a heightened mood, another day at Kashipur, the Master commissioned Holy Mother with these words: 'See, the people of Calcutta appear to be crawling about like worms in the dark. Do look after them.' Again Mother beseeched him: 'I am a woman. How can that be?' The Master pointed to himself and said: 'What after all has this one done? You'll have to do much more.' And added: 'Is this my trouble alone? It's yours too' (120-1). Mother did much indeed.

Sri Ramakrishna was not a dry, aloof ascetic. His love was not passive; it was actively involved with all beings. All types of people came before the Master seeking his grace and wisdom. The Master's example must have made a deep impact



on Mother's life. As the stream of humanity passed by him, Sri Sarada Devi was ever at his service. Sri Ramakrishna in turn used every opportunity to teach her. She received the Master's loving instruction while serving him and his family at Dakshineswar and Shyampukur. She learned to serve everyone worshipfully—from deities and brahmanas to ordinary people. The Master counselled her in practical as well as spiritual matters. He taught her to manage her time economically and efficiently, to conserve rather than waste her energy, and to plan ahead. For example, he told her: 'Move cautiously. See that you don't leave behind any of your belongings in the boat or railway compartment.'<sup>3</sup>

The Mother must have felt deeply impelled to emulate him and to express the same love for humanity he had shown her. She had a spontaneous tendency to serve agonized people in many ways. When one of her disciples asked her about her infinite love and consequent suffering, Mother replied: 'My son, you will understand human suffering when you grow up. You are not a Mother.'<sup>4</sup> Unaffected by cultural, social, and geographical barriers she made the whole world her own. She was the universal Mother and 'her heart took everybody in its all-comprehensive grasp—sweepers, *bagdis*, and weavers. Among her companions were the fisherwomen who bathed at the same time as the Mother. The unbounded grandeur of her maternal affection reached the very core of humanity.'<sup>5</sup>

Perfect in obedience, she was a sovereign teacher. She maintained her spiritual purity and power by teaching others solely through her sweet expression of divine love. She rarely used words and rather spoke through her actions, which conveyed spiritual truths. Her blazing spirituality and life of total absorption in the Divine made a deep impact in the minds of disciples and devotees alike. Simultaneously

mother, teacher, and divinity incarnate she functioned harmoniously as wife, nun, and guru.

From the seemingly endless reservoir of anecdotes and reminiscences about her divinity, compassion, and love, as expressed over the course of her life, a few are presented here. Earnest spiritual aspirants will easily immerse themselves in the ocean of inspiration that is Holy Mother.

### ***Her Unceasing Concern and Love***

Holy Mother was utterly practical in all matters and relations. She spent her entire energy for the all-round well-being of the Master's devotees. Through her rigorous discipline of performing japa from an early age, she established the habit of mentally repeating the mantra while performing her duties and other activities. Therefore, she urged all devotees to practise this spiritual discipline. Her serene countenance attested to her divinity. Just thinking of her calm, peaceful image made the hearts and minds of devotees quiet and peaceful. As the silent dewdrop nourishes the leaf before dawn, Holy Mother nurtured their spiritual life.

She became the consoler, guide, and source of inspiration to many seekers and devotees. Whether she was at Dakshineswar, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Koalpara, Udbodhan, or any other place, she ministered to the devotees with unfailing love and vigilance. Her motherly love made every one of them feel that she was one's own mother. At Jayrambati she had the great joy of looking after the devotees entirely by herself. Sometimes they sought her out for mantra initiation, sometimes they had a desire just to be near her. Particularly at Jayrambati devotees were as open and frank with her as with their own mothers. Her true love for them was forever engraved in their memory. She once said to a devotee: 'My son, if a thorn pricks your foot, it hurts me like a spear entering my heart.'<sup>6</sup>

Holy Mother combined tradition and a liberal attitude, always in the light of the Master's teachings. Although she was very punctilious about tradition—especially in the matter of food—she never hurt anyone's feelings. If a devotee wanted a particular food, she would make every effort to acquire it. The inhabitants of Jayrambati could see her limping from house to house for a little milk or vegetables or even for fish, which was very hard to get in that rural area. Mother suffered from rheumatism and these efforts caused her much difficulty. The devotees for whom she made such immense efforts were unaware that they had acted improperly by expecting all the amenities of their own household while they were guests of Mother. Devotees sometimes came to see her at odd hours. Mother never minded these difficulties. The bad traits of her children, who were 'spread all over the world', were obliterated by her pure love. She loved to tell one or another of her sisters-in-law: 'Hullo, my dear, I have no trouble on account of my children. Even though a hundred of my children should come, I can tackle them all single-handed' (389).

Swami Parameshwarananda's reminiscences of Holy Mother during her later years leave us with a deep feeling for her infinite motherly affection. The swami recalls that at 5 p.m. one Mahashtami Day, he discovered her alone in the kitchen busily preparing *puris*. She was drawing the flour from a large bag of nearly five kilograms, the full amount of which she intended to use. She was also preparing curry. A few female relatives were still in the house while this was going on. Despite her obvious rheumatism, none of them was helping her; she worked alone late

into the night. Parameshwarananda was stunned and deeply moved by this observation. Here was Mother taking care of all her children—devotees, household members, and others. Moreover, she was doing it with total willingness, without resentment and with no concern about her own physical difficulty. Mother herself liked to say on occasions: 'Can you call him a man, who is devoid of compassion? He is a veritable beast. Sometimes I forget myself in compassion. Then I do not remember who I am.'<sup>7</sup>

Swami Saradeshananda describes a similar circumstance in his reminiscences. Once, when Mother's birthday was being celebrated with great splendour at Jayrambati, Saradeshananda was present. Many revered sadhus and devotees were present on this occasion. During her



birthday festivities, which lasted throughout the day, Saradeshananda observed that Mother was not to be found among the people honouring her. He found Mother cutting vegetables on the kitchen veranda and lovingly preparing a meal for her *sejo-mami*, third aunt, who had given birth to her youngest son a few days before. *Sejo-mami* was confined alone in a room with no one else to think about her needs on that day. Mother, fully concentrated on showing her love and affection on her relative in a calm and peaceful way, seemed completely unaware of her own birth anniversary and all its joyous ceremony. 'For whom was this Birthday Celebration being observed with such *éclat*?' the swami wondered. 'Was this the illustration,' he thought to himself, 'of complete detachment, comparable to a drop of water on a lotus leaf?'<sup>8</sup> He felt that Mother was herself the illustration of the Master's parable about detached service. The swami thus realized, again through Mother's own example, how to serve others without being attached to the results of our efforts and without any distraction from the loving act of service in which we are immersed.

### **Girishchandra Ghosh**

Girishchandra Ghosh was a man of many faults. Those who knew this householder disciple intimately noticed one virtue that subdued them all. That one virtue was his fiery, overflowing faith in the divinity of the Master and Holy Mother. At first he accepted her simply as the wife of his guru. Many years later he recognized her as the universal Divine Mother.

In 1891 Girish went to Jayrambati seeking Mother's grace. His three-year-old son, to whom he was greatly attached, had a premature death. His desire for Mother's consolation was more than fulfilled. He recognized Holy Mother as the Divine Mother who had been protecting

him from childhood. He was also fully convinced of her healing power over him.<sup>9</sup> His stay with her for a few months after his son's death rewarded him with immense joy.

Mother's affection for Girish was unlimited. Girish liked a cup of tea with milk in the morning; it had become his habit. Milk was hard to get in Jayrambati. In spite of this circumstance, Mother, old and frail, would go door-to-door every morning to get a little milk for his tea. She cooked tasty meals for him and kept his bed sheets clean. She washed them herself with soap in the pond (218–19). These simple acts were among the visible positive signs of her motherly affection. They were also silently manifest in a more subtle manner, which Girish was capable of noticing.

In 1896, when Holy Mother was living in Baghbazar, Girish visited her often. During one of these visits he was overwhelmed with humility and prostrated himself before her. He arose with folded hands and stood before her like a remorseful child. His face was burning with emotion. He tearfully confessed: 'Mother, when I come to you I feel like a little child coming to its own mother. Had I been a "grown-up" son, I would have served my mother. But it is quite different here; you serve us and we do not serve you. You are going to Jayrambati to serve the people, even by cooking food for others in the village kitchen. How can I serve you, and what do I know about serving Mother?' His voice became choked and his whole face flushed with emotion as he spoke. At last, checking himself a little and turning to the others who stood behind him, he said: 'It is difficult for human beings to believe that God can incarnate in a human form like our own. Can you realize that you are standing before the Mother of the Universe in the form of a village woman? Yet she is the Mother of the Universe—Maha-Maya, Maha-Sakti—appearing on

the earth for the salvation of all creatures and at the same time exemplifying the ideal of true motherhood' (219–20).

Holy Mother's loving protection made a lasting impression on Girish's mind. In October 1907 he requested her to be present at his house for that year's Durga Puja. Despite her prolonged physical illness, her recognition of his deep, abiding devotion brought her to Calcutta for the event. The first day of Durga Puja was observed at Balaram's house. For many hours an endless stream of devotees placed flowers at Holy Mother's feet. She sat quietly the whole time. Then she went to Girish's house, where she stayed for the rest of the worship. On the second day she still was not feeling well. However, she draped a cotton sheet around her body and sat serenely for many hours. All the devotees were filled with joy. The strain, however, weakened her. It became clear that Mother would not be able to satisfy their greatest wish: her presence at the worship for the most significant part, which took place at night, at the precise juncture of the eighth and ninth days of the moon. In their eyes the worship would be useless without Holy Mother's presence. Girish was the most distressed of all the disciples present. To everyone's amazement, at the exact moment of the blessed juncture she appeared at the rear doorway and said: 'Here I am.' Girish was beside himself with joy: 'I thought that my worship had come to naught, and just now the Mother knocks at the door and announces, "Here I am".' Everyone rushed to offer flowers at her feet. So did his theatrical troupe of performers. The whole time Holy Mother stood still at the north-west corner of Girish's house, quietly gazing upon the image of the goddess Durga (223).

Although Mother's condition required that she return home immediately, she stayed longer for the worship of Kali. Having satisfied the

devotees, she returned to Jayrambati with her travelling companions. Mother had directed her brothers at Jayrambati to arrange for her safe arrival on the other side of the Amodar River, but they neglected their duty. She had to ford the river on her own and walk part of the way before arriving at Jayrambati in the darkness of night. Swami Premananda writes:

Who has understood the Holy Mother? Who can understand her? You have heard about Sita, Savitri, Vishnupriya and Radharani. The Holy Mother occupies a far higher place. Not even the slightest trace of divine powers was noticeable in her. ...

The exalted Empress has of her own accord appeared as the indigent woman. She sweeps floors, scours vessels, husks paddy and even removes the leavings of devotees after food. She has been undergoing great hardships at Jayrambati in order to teach the householders their duties. Infinite patience, unbounded mercy and above all the negation of even the slightest trace of egoism.<sup>10</sup>

(To be continued)

## References

1. Swami Tapasyananda, *Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1969), 38.
2. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 2004), 120.
3. Her Devotee-children, *The Gospel of the Holy Mother* (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 181.
4. Swami Prabhananda, 'Naba Vedanter Rupayana Srīma', *Shatarupe Sarada* (Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2009), 469.
5. Sudesh, 'Holy Mother: The Mother of All', *Vedanta Kesari*, 86/12 (December 1999), 517.
6. *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, 366.
7. *The Gospel of the Holy Mother*, 78.
8. Swami Saradeshnananda, *The Mother As I Saw Her* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1982), 186.
9. See *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, 216.
10. *Sri Sarada Devi: The Great Wonder* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1994), 36.



# Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy and Work

Krishnakoli Bhattacharya

VOLUMES WOULD BE REQUIRED to describe in detail Swami Vivekananda's philosophy, but it can be summarized in a few words: showing humankind the way to unity



and universality. Philosophical and metaphysical discussions about Reality are generally beyond the reach of common people. Swamiji's uniqueness resides in his cap-

acity to make the difficult Vedantic concepts of unity and universality available to everyone, everywhere, and in a simple manner. Besides being under the tutelage of Sri Ramakrishna for five years, it was Swamiji's profound studies and own spiritual realizations that gave power and authority to his ideas. He was able to see that the world was in need of these principles more than ever before if humanity was to raise its moral and spiritual life.

## **Ancient Ideas in New Forms**

The essence of the Vedas is found in the Upanishads, which are the concluding part of the Vedas and therefore called Vedanta. This supersensory knowledge that the Vedas and Vedanta contain is not the monopoly of Hindus, but it belongs to the whole humanity, because this knowledge is applicable to everybody without distinction.

The Vedas are universal scriptures that declare the impersonal Truth.

The *Isha Upanishad* teaches: 'When to the man of realization all beings become the very Self, then what delusion and what sorrow can there be for that seer of oneness?'<sup>1</sup> Such lofty universal ideas have prevailed in India since ancient Vedic times. True, it is a supreme sublime realization, but due to many factors it was for a long time worked out only on the spiritual plane, and that too not by many, as there were several qualifications and rigorous disciplines required for such realization. This is the reason why mainly monks could articulate and actualize this highest experience. Swamiji preached the ideas of Vedanta in a way that could be applied not only to the spiritual plane but also to the mental, moral, social, and individual planes. This was revolutionary. Swamiji saw that Vedanta was vast enough to transform society through its practice in daily life. He said:

Believe, therefore, in yourselves, and if you want material wealth, work it out; it will come to you. If you want to be intellectual, work it out on the intellectual plane, and intellectual giants you shall be. And if you want to attain to freedom, work it out on the spiritual plane, and free you shall be and shall enter into Nirvana, the Eternal Bliss. But one defect which lay in the Advaita was its being worked out so long on the spiritual plane only, and nowhere else; now the time has come when you have to make it practical.<sup>2</sup>

When Swamiji preached, he did not do so in the manner an academic philosopher

undertakes a scholarly exercise, he instead used a language accessible to ordinary people, a modern idiom that at the same time did not leave aside the scientific language. He brought the intellectual light of Acharya Shankara and joined it with the wonderful compassionate heart of Buddha. Moreover, Swamiji showed that the oneness delineated in the Advaita Vedanta can be attained through jnana as well as through love, work, and yoga. In this mission, it can be affirmed, he has effected a unification of all the philosophies and sadhanas of India. And he achieved this through his loving heart and tenacity to communicate a universal ideal to everybody.

Swamiji presented the conclusions of Vedanta in a totally new format and perspective, making ancient scholarly ideas living and appealing. Laying stress on Vedantic liberality he also showed how the various philosophies of India slowly lead a genuine seeker to the highest experience as propounded in Uttara Mimamsa, another name for Vedanta. He never denied the conclusions of the Sankhya philosophy and extensively quoted its ideas. He also valued and taught yoga as a vital spiritual sadhana. As for Purva Mimamsa, the philosophy based on the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, he looked upon the system as an orthodox reaction to Buddhism, which had repudiated the authority of the Vedas and rejected every authority except that of Buddha's teachings. He used the style and reasoning of the Nyaya and Vaishesika philosophers. Thus, out of these seemingly confusing different schools and thoughts, Swamiji succeeded in combining and evolving a single integrated philosophy needed for our times.

Swamiji also worked for the reconciliation of the various religions of the world. He understood that the power in religions of doing good to humanity was still immense and that the different religions were unnecessarily quarrelling among themselves. This he did by showing their common ground and also by presenting the principles of Vedanta. The impersonal aspect of God is vital to the ideal of a universal religion, yet each person must proceed from the path he or she used to tread. For ages most of the differences between religions were based on their sacred scriptures



and beliefs, but when seen in the light of the principles of Vedanta they do not appear contradictory, they are rather revealed as complimentary.

Another important tenet of Vedanta that Swamiji tirelessly preached is the concept of an immanent God—a God present everywhere and in everything—which at the same time does not conflict with the concept of a personal God. From this follows the firm belief of the inner divinity of all beings. The real nature of a person is Satchidananda, existence-knowledge-bliss, not the perishable physical body, nor the mind with its limitations. The real person is the Atman, deathless, endless, omnipotent, and omniscient. It is on this level of spiritual oneness that universality becomes unshakable and fundamental.

### ***Integration of the Fragmented Universe***

Today science has demonstrated through



physical means the oneness of this multidimensional universe, which is so interconnected that whatever affects a single individual necessarily affects others. This has increased a certain amount of global consciousness. But still we are too far from actualizing Swamiji's ideas, like this:

One atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay, the whole of life, within its scope (3.269).



He concludes by saying that from the lowest worm to the highest being all are different manifestations of the same Reality, which results in the concept of perfect universality. Swamiji, as the great preacher of universal brotherhood, never broke down obvious distinctions, but reminded everyone that at the core of diversity there is unity. This common centre, the common basis of humanity, is what gives rise to love and sympathy for all.

Due to many historical and intellectual reasons Advaita Vedanta had for centuries stressed the transcendental aspect of Brahman, and this led many to believe that this world is unsubstantial, like water in a mirage. Swamiji, besides

speaking of the transcendental Brahman, said that that same transcendental Reality is also immanent, palpable everywhere. He never diverged from the basic principles of Vedanta and presented the full force of its philosophy for the greater good of humanity. However, unlike many previous commentators on Vedanta, Swamiji emphasized certain points that brought about a revolution in the interpretation of Vedanta; one of those points is the concept of service to God in the human being. If the highest Reality was in each and every person, then service becomes worship to God. Swamiji said: 'The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion' (6.288). Thus, the ordinary ideas of universalism and humanity were totally transformed. Emphasizing this aspect of her Master's message, Sister Nivedita most eloquently said:

If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid. This is the realisation which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing Jnana and Bhakti. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality (I.xv–xvi).


Most religious teachers preached pity and compassion towards beings, but were unable to give it a rational basis. Others taught love, but

based their love on narrow grounds. Yet others preached pure devotion, or absolute knowledge, or selfless action as means of attaining the ideal of life. But in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda we have for the first time the most practical and complete expression of all these partial views. He pushed them to their logical end. The assertion that God exists and that there is one Atman in all beings cannot stop at mere beliefs and words; according to Swamiji, it must be made practical. He also said that in the ultimate analysis all knowledge and devotion and work and yoga will lose their initial distinctions and become one in the advanced stages of sadhana.

### **Need of the Times**

The modern age is witnessing a steep rise in mental suffering. This stems from a basic moral and spiritual disorder, which in turn arises as a result of growing selfish attitudes. The effects are a paralyzing human weakness and a profound crisis in human consciousness. Cut off from the universal, individuals who desire only to satisfy personal needs live, consciously or unconsciously, in vain. With material prosperity and intellectual acquisitions life has become a confused mass of needs, impulses, ambitions, and activities, without any

control or guidance. This has made humanity experience an unrelenting and strange emptiness. People are drifting without any goal.

Nowadays many studies are increasingly leading us to universality, but still the true responsibility of living in a global community, a global village, has not been fully accepted. What is urgently needed in our lives, if we are to live in peace and harmony, is a holistic vision of ourselves based on the Vedantic principles as preached by Swami Vivekananda. From this will emerge a deeper sense of belonging to each other, which will remove the feeling of being lost in an alien and wicked world. These ideas of universality are ancient and are the common property of everybody. These truths had to be given a wider scope and presented in a language that could be understood by all. And for this Swamiji tirelessly worked and preached, for it is only through such ideas that humankind will realize its inherent divinity. 

### **References**

1. *Isha Upanishad*, 4.
2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 3.427.





# Meditation in Buddhism

Dr Amartya Kumar Bhattacharya

**B**UDDHA'S LIFE AND WORK can be summarized by modifying Julius Caesar's well-known statement '*Veni, vidi, vici*; I came, I saw, I conquered' to 'I searched, I meditated, I awoke'. Buddha searched for the means to end human suffering, which led him to an exploration of the inner self, its working, and its dysfunctional behaviour. He meditated to become free from such conditions and, through a radical shift in consciousness, rose from being Siddhartha Gautama to the state of Buddha, the awakened one. Having gone through many years of hardship and teachers, and finding them futile, Buddha preached self-reliance and self-effort: '*Atma hi atmano natha*; one is one's own master.' He also taught one to be one's own refuge. Generally, a person is dependent on something or someone and thus relinquishes responsibility for controlling one's life. This is because in a deep philosophical sense one is deluded, asleep, and unaware of one's true nature. And when the process of awakening is complete, one burns the world of the senses and rises from its ashes to the world of pure Consciousness. Buddhism is a journey in which a person starts asleep and ends awake. And the process by which this takes place is through meditation.

The objective of Buddhism is nirvana and *bodhi*, perfect knowledge, enlightenment. The word *buddhi* means intellect, and *bodha*, to understand; it is from these words that the word *bodhi* is derived. *Anubodha*, deep understanding, sharpens, refines, contextualises, and keeps one on the path to *bodhi* and nirvana. This entire process, based on meditation, forms the

heart of Buddhism. The results of meditation are enormous: one transcends the boundaries of the body and 'knows' that the entire universe has become one's body; one knows that the mind has been transformed into a spiritual one; one knows that though one may continue to reside in the mortal body, one's consciousness has become irreversibly altered, universal; one feels pervaded by peace and becomes awakened. Buddha did not preach the Dharma only for the brave and the strong. As a saviour of humankind his teachings are applicable to everybody, provided one has the determination to follow them. Buddha asked for nothing but conviction and a desire to become free. Meditation that leads to enlightenment is the full manifestation of the Buddha-nature inherent in every person. Buddha says: '*Avidya paramam malam*; ignorance is the greatest impurity.' Buddhism affirms that nirvana is not only available for a person living in the world, but that nirvana is only possible within the world. The way to achieve nirvana is the noble eightfold path.

## Seeing Clearly

*Pashyana* or *darshana* means to see things in the ordinary way; *vipashyana* or *vidarshana* means to see in a special way, with insight. This type of meditation is popular in South Asia and other countries that adhere to Theravada Buddhism. It will not be correct, however, to say that *vipashyana* is only confined to these countries; it is popular in all Buddhist traditions and today the world over as well. It was Buddha who presented this technique of meditation in the



*Buddhist shrine at the Ramakrishna Monastery, Trabuco Canyon*

*Mahasmritipratishthana Sutra*, which is found in the *Madhyama* [*Majjhima*] *Nikaya*.

Meditation is something that cannot be fully explained in words because it is an intense internal process; it has to be experienced to be understood completely. Knowing *about*

meditation is one thing, knowing meditation is quite another. To practise meditation one is advised to sit alone in a quiet room and comfortably cross-legged on a soft cushion in *padmasana*, lotus posture, or in *ardha-padmasana*, half-lotus posture, or in *sukhasana*, happy



posture, and try to enter into *vipashyana*, meditation. *Padmasana* is also called *dhyanasana*, meditation posture, in the Vajrayana school of Mahayana Buddhism. Before one can start the practice of regular meditation, the help of a master or guru to guide one in the initial stages is indispensable. One must sit with the spine and head held erect. Torpor or tiredness should not disturb this posture—in time torpor and tiredness are overcome by this very posture. The hands may be placed in the *bhumisparsha* mudra, fingers touching the *bhumi*, ground, like one finds in many statues of Buddha—it is also known as *sakshi*, witness, mudra. Alternatively, a person's hands may be in the cosmic mudra: the left hand on top of the right, the middle joints of the middle fingers together, and the thumbs lightly touching each other. The hands should be held against the body, with the thumbs at about the height of the navel. This mudra is very popular in East Asia. The samadhi mudra consists of the right hand placed on top of the left, with the tips of the two thumbs touching each other. Jnana mudra consists of the hands held straight and placed on the knees, with the thumb and the index finger touching each other and the other fingers straight.

After sitting correctly one has to close the eyes and focus attention on inhalation and exhalation of the breath. There should be no interference or adjustment of the natural sequence of respiration. A meditator is to simply focus on the nostrils and observe the natural flow of breath. Respiration is natural, one has no craving or aversion towards it; it is always in the present and, since one breathes from the moment of birth to the moment of death, it is a convergence of the past, present, and future within the physical framework of the body. Respiration is thus an appropriate process for

concentrating the mind. Though this technique is not too difficult, the mind does not usually want to stay in the present moment; it runs to the past or the future. A little effort is needed to prevent the mind from wandering thus. This is called right effort.

At this stage there are other distractions that prevent the mind from becoming concentrated. Sometimes these distractions appear to be overwhelming. The effort to focus on respiration should continue; the key is to not waver or give up. These distractions slowly fade if one does not pay attention to them. Of course, a learner soon feels that initially meditation is hard work. As the body and the mind gradually conform to a routine and a totally different exercise, bodily and mental reactions become less intense. A few restrictions about food and sleep greatly help; and in all things the middle path is the optimal one. Right mindfulness, which is mindfulness of breathing, follows right effort immediately. Right concentration becoming deeper and deeper leads to higher stages of absorption.

While lifting the mind to concentration, sometimes deep-seated distractions of the mind become obstacles. These distractions are latent feelings of anger, craving, sadness, and so on. The remedy in all such cases is to return the focus on respiration and try to lift the mind to concentration again and again. A fundamental truth that has to be constantly recollected is that all things are devoid of *svabhava*, fixed essence, and that is why they are amenable to change. In other words, change is possible only if entities are *shunya*, empty, of *svabhava*. When distractions come one need not grasp or dwell on them. They just come and pass, as this is their nature. A tremendous strength grows through this attitude of being a witness of the panorama of the mind.

There are four parts in *vipashyana*, each one in an ascending order: *kaya anupashyana*,

*vedana anupashyana*, *chitta anupashyana*, and *dharma anupashyana*. *Anupashyana* means to see minutely, to scrutinize; each level must be subjected to scrutiny starting at the *kaya*, body; *vedana*, sensations; *chitta*, mind; and *dharma*, mental contents. The true nature of these four levels, one after another, reveals itself to the meditator, and one is then able to remove defilement from the innermost recesses of the mind. Awareness and equanimity, *upeksha*, together, symbolize *vipashyana* meditation. If either part is missing, one cannot attain stability. One is surprised to realize that even in ordinary respiration there are so many dimensions. This surprise keeps on increasing as one feels the minute sensations all over the body. Observation gives one power over all these movements. As scrutiny extends to the mind and its contents one is not swayed by what arises, rather a tremendous sense of detachment develops. *Vipashyana* leads to a clear insight into the physical and mental structures, and finally it leads to *bodhi*. In some forms of Mahayana, meditation is done on Buddha; it is called *buddhanupashyana*. Meditation may also be described as *tapasya*; *tapas* means heat, so *tapasya* burns away the impurities of the mind.

### **Awakened Mind**

As the meditative process becomes more and more mature one starts feeling that one has been living for so long with closed eyes. Now, with the rise of tremendous insight, the eyes are suddenly opened and one can see things as they are. On the plane of the senses the external world does not change, but the way of psychologically processing the external world undergoes a drastic change. The world is now experienced as full of joy and peace. An awakened person, who possesses a *bodhichitta*, enlightened mind, feels surrounded by peace at all times. It is important

to understand that this is a rock solid experience and does not depend on anything or anyone. One continues doing one's daily activities, but one's vision of the world is now fundamentally different, it has changed for the better. One realizes that there is no need to control any aspect of the external world, that one gains more by letting go; one opts for shifting consciousness within, as one becomes aware of the mental processes in every situation—whether caught in a traffic jam or standing in a queue.

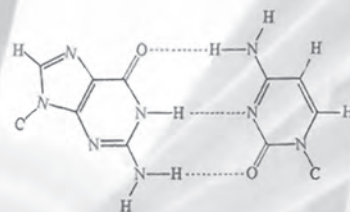
Ordinarily, people are bound to the world of the senses and, therefore, live a life so dependent on sense objects that they lack the initiative to free themselves from this bondage. They then repose faith in supernatural beings, who are propitiated in the hope of being rescued from troubles. But very few people take up meditation, because Buddhism teaches that this pursuit needs the foundation of an ethical life. Down the ages monks, yogis, philosophers, lay devotees, and even rank empiricists have meditated. And it has been universally recognized that all those who have meditated have contributed to the growth of the Dharma. This is one of the reasons why Buddhism is spreading all over the world. Meditation can be taught to people of any cultural background.

While in the kingdom of Kosala and in response to questions by devotees as to the importance or unimportance of belief, Buddha pointed out the distinction saying that belief always denotes a second-hand approach to truth, it is knowledge through the experience of others. But what is desired is first-hand knowledge of truth. The result of this distinction is that the modicum of doubt that always accompanies belief is absent in true knowledge. Nirvana cannot be attained via someone else's knowledge, and this is where meditation becomes a suitable way.



# All Life is One

Dr Valmiki Ghosh



EVER SINCE HUMANKIND started looking at the world scientifically, it was amazed to study the remarkable variety of life saturating everything on earth. This extraordinary ‘veil’ of known facts, however, appeared so satisfying that the a posteriori conclusions—from known facts back to their possible causes—were considered sufficient. These scientific studies gradually resulted in conflicts between religion and science. Yet the noted physicist Richard Feynman issued a caveat for relying too much on the grandiloquence of known facts, since a good many, he said, still remained beyond the scope of human imagination. The German physicist Werner Heisenberg

came up with some kind of compromise, which became known as the uncertainty principle. This principle is about the momentum of the path an electron takes as it moves through space: either we can know this momentum or we can know where it is at a given instant, but we cannot know both. This is why when Heisenberg was asked how one could envision an atom, he gave a cryptic advice: ‘Don’t try.’<sup>1</sup> The atom’s behaviour is in many ways similar to the enveloping mystery that surrounds our approach to God.

Let us remember that James Watson and Francis Crick published their discovery on the structure of DNA in April 1953. It may be a little

odd and amusing to think that neither Crick nor Watson were ever formally trained in biochemistry. Watson, for example, conducted a popular radio programme called 'The Quiz Kids'. He was at the beginning more interested in the forms of popular culture than pursuing science as a professional scientist. Watson frankly admitted this and jokingly said in his autobiography: 'It was my hope that the gene might be solved without my learning any chemistry.'<sup>2</sup> Charles Darwin, after his failures in the study of medicine and law, finally managed to earn a degree in divinity from Cambridge. The stuff of life under the seas and earth left natural scientists in hair-raising amazement. It was found after a relentless scientific and heroic search that life on this planet is the result of a single design, corresponding to a single plan. Biologists called it the 'big birth'.

### ***The Single Plan of Life***

This article suggests that Vedanta solved the intricacies of creation long ago. Religious philosophy should not be viewed in terms of the daily rituals and practices that have come down to us by tradition. Of course, there are some Vedic rituals that have a concrete philosophy behind them, and for this reason they are clearly distinguished from superstition. Religious philosophy and wisdom should be permanently severed from banal customs. The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi asked us not to harm even animals. She knew, though not as a crude piece of information, that all life is interconnected. Microbes supply the greater part of the planet's breathable oxygen; algae and other tiny organisms bubbling away in the sea blow out 150 billion kilograms of oxygen every year. Holy Mother, needless to say, understood and visualized the abiding principle behind the great plan. She felt full identification with everything in nature. 'Brahmachari Rashbehari asked her one day, "Are you the Mother

of all?" "Yes," replied the Mother. "Even of these lower creatures?" pressed the inquirer. "Yes," answered the Mother.'<sup>3</sup> In view of what scientists found much later, this statement sounds like an oracular utterance.

Likewise, Sri Ramakrishna, who was in many ways knowledge personified, was once seen in his room at Dakshineswar squeezing the bedbugs found in his pillow.<sup>4</sup> That was a spiritual signal for distinguishing between sickening superstition and philosophical wisdom, which inspires one to look at life as the consequence of a single plan. This is like differentiating between nihilistic violence and constructive violence mooted by social anthropology.

The Ramakrishna tradition is distinguished by spiritual sagacity when it asks its followers to first feel a kinship with the rest of the world before meditation. Swami Vivekananda emphasized the need of mentally sending a message of peace and love to our fellow creatures. Let us first be a part of the grand process, of the whole. Every creature, large or small, aspires to complete the circle of fulfilment. Jesus too implores us to think of and love our neighbours, our fellow beings. Science has shown that every living thing is an elaboration of a single plan. The chemical functions taking place in a banana are similar to those taking place in us.

Remember what Matt Ridley said: 'Wherever you go in the world, whatever animal, plant, bug or blob you look at, if it is alive, it will use the same dictionary and know the same code. All life is one.'<sup>5</sup> Thus, we are the result of a single genetic trick available to us from generation to generation over billions of years. We started talking about DNA a little while before. Genetic researchers found to their surprise in their experiments on gene-swapping or horizontal gene transfer that a mouse-eye gene was able to make a viable eye in a fruit fly; in fact, it could make

a fly's eye in spite of the fact that they had not shared any common ancestor for at least 500 million years!<sup>6</sup> Swapping genetic material has now been scientifically vindicated. It seems that a single set of blueprints has gone into the making of life on earth. Every life, therefore, is precious.

We are strangely alike, as if the unique bond of relationship with our fellow creatures were conspired by nature. In a real sense, it has been. If we compare our genes with any other human being's genes, it will be found that on average we are about 99.9 per cent similar. This is a great fact that makes us a single species and ridicules our tenacity to distinguish between the white and the black, between 'our' race or country and 'their' race or country, and then conclude that one is 'superior' to another. The tiny difference is just 0.1 per cent, and that much is what counts for all our differences. The endless re-combinations of our genomes, each nearly identical to all the others, though not quite the same, makes us what we are, both as individuals and species.

### **Micro and Macro**

Remember Shakespeare's Prospero, commenting on the brief spell of life on earth: 'We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep.'<sup>7</sup> And William Wordsworth's words in his famous 'Immortality Ode': 'Our birth is but a sleep and forgetting.' Both writers did not scientifically know the cause of the fragility of life on earth, but poets and artists throughout the world went far beyond the terrain of ordinary human knowledge, because poets, Wordsworth wrote, are endowed with an extraordinary degree of sensibility. This is also true, possibly more vitally true, about some spiritual leaders born in India. A leader like Swami Vivekananda, for example, who once woke up in the middle of the night because he felt a serious pain in his chest, and the next morning it

was learnt that many people had died in Fiji due to a volcanic eruption that had occurred at the time the swami felt the pain. Distance and geographical barriers cannot prevent extraordinary human contact.

It seems highly tempting to consider Wordsworth's idea that our birth on this planet is like a sleep and forgetting. Probably a whole book can be written on this idea. Suffice it to say that we are extraordinarily lucky to be here; and by 'we' not only human beings are meant, but all living things. It is both a sleep and the act of forgetting. How often do we forget this in our anger and pride! Shakespeare's famous utterance is a commentary on the mortality of existence, but Wordsworth's brings out the essence of the evolutionary process. The involuntary but inevitable process of forgetting by the adult mind is compared to a child, who is believed to be in touch with the divine radiance and keeping its spiritual heritage alive.<sup>8</sup> Wordsworth later moves on to make his well-known claim that the child is the 'father of man'. Shakespeare's idea, brilliantly expressed, laments on the fragility of life. That is a remarkable feat, enviable and unparalleled. Wordsworth's idea is spiritual in essence, and he probably had a glimpse of that divine radiance occasionally.

Our bodies are vessels of the whims of the organic process that constantly take place within us. Most of our DNA, commonly called junk, 'exist for the pure and simple reason that they are good at getting themselves duplicated.'<sup>9</sup> Our DNA is devoted not to the individual but to itself. It may sound a bit depressing to make a parody of our vainglorious existence, but this is the truth. According to one audacious calculation, one might have as much as a million kilometres of DNA bundled up inside. The bewildering fact is that DNA is itself not alive. No molecule is, but DNA especially is not alive; yet,

our bodies love making DNA, and it is at the very heart of life itself. DNA is described by the geneticist Richard Lewontin to be ‘among the most non-reactive, chemically inert molecules in the living world.’<sup>10</sup> This is why DNA can be recovered from patches of long-dried blood or semen in criminal investigations.

The facts are more complex than we assume. It is not individual genes but complexes of genes that work in alliance. Otherwise, we could isolate the bad ones and tamper with them. We can do this only by meditation, by controlling our thought processes. We do not know yet what physical forms our thought and memory do take; what we do know is that they are there. Many functions within the body are to be solved by science. The study is on; the end may not be in sight, but the onward process is pretty alluring. Ambiguity lies at the root of creation. We cannot easily escape from this notion.

Looking at ourselves in the mirror we are hardly aware of the fact that we are beholding ten thousand trillion cells, and that almost every one of them holds two yards of densely compacted DNA. We are blessed to carry all these cells. One calculation says that we may have as much as twenty million kilometres of DNA bundled up inside us. If all our DNA were ‘woven together into a single fine strand, there would still be enough of it to stretch from the Earth to the Moon and back, not once or twice, but again and again.’<sup>11</sup>

Swami Ranganathananda, who led a wonderfully rich spiritual life, tirelessly worked to find out the underlying bond between religion and science. He describes Saraswati, the goddess of learning, as ‘pure science’, and Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, as ‘applied science’, urging us to forget the old belief that they are jealous sisters. Having a picture of Lakshmi and doing puja is not going to produce wealth. The swami says:

‘That was the foolish thing many people did. Go and work. This is what creates Lakshmi ... the product of Saraswati—pure science and applied science, we say.’<sup>12</sup> Inherent is the implication that there can be no conflict between the pursuits of a scientist and those of a spiritual leader. Sri Ramakrishna is the ideal embodiment of this unique synthesis.


Ranganathananda mentions Claude Bernard, the French physiologist, in order to emphasize the homeostatic condition of the human body—another marvel of nature among the incredible many. Modern neurology, the swami says, tells us about the homeostatic equilibrium within the body that achieves its previous calm after work, like the surface of water in a lake or river when the ripples caused by a boat or ship gliding by gradually settle down. Everyone is endowed with a divine power within, Vedanta assures. Joseph Conrad, a leading influence in the modernist movement in the field of literature, says: ‘The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future.’<sup>13</sup> Conrad’s haunting tale *Heart of Darkness* does not lead us to darkness but to light, to enlightenment.

Einstein often said that it is hard to sneak a look at God’s cards. One day Latu Maharaj, who later became Swami Adbhutananda, was massaging Sri Ramakrishna’s legs. The latter suddenly asked him what God was doing now. Latu Maharaj, taken aback, said: “What do I know of His affairs?” When seeing me silent, he [Sri Ramakrishna] said: “Your Ramji is passing an elephant through the eye of the needle.”<sup>14</sup>

Science defends the proposition that though we are atomically numerous all life is one. When we die, our atoms dissemble and move off to be used elsewhere—a leaf, other human being, a drop of dew. The Bhagavadgita marvellously sums it up: ‘As after rejecting worn-out clothes a



person takes up other new clothes.’<sup>15</sup> Atoms go on forever; no one actually knows how long an atom can survive. According to Martin Rees, an atom lives ‘probably about  $10^{35}$  years.’<sup>16</sup> This is an incredibly long time.

And, most of all, it is a trick played by the ‘veil’ enveloping the microcosm and the macrocosm: the ‘elephant through the eye of a needle’. The end of the game lies hidden to those who run after the variety, but it is different to the one who sees Vedanta’s oneness. 

### Notes and References

1. H C von Baeyer, *Taming the Atom: The Emergence of the Visible Microworld* (London: Viking, 1993), 43.

**V**edanta does not prevent a man from adopting the most up-to-date methods of science for finding out facts; nor does it fight shy of all the accurate and systematized knowledge supplied by the various branches of modern science. It is prepared to accept every item of true knowledge wherever it may come from and is also prepared to reject everything which is proved by science to be false. Observation and experiment, analysis and synthesis, generalization and classification under universal laws and principles, all form part of Vedanta. But whereas the modern sciences are content with demarcating or limiting their jurisdiction to external physical phenomena which are capable of being observed by all alike at the same time, Vedanta in its scientific aspect would have no such limitations, but would extend its domain to internal spiritual phenomena also. It is prepared to go as far as the physical sciences as well as the mental and moral science such as psychology, logic, ethics, etc. go or take us; but its special province is the study of the Self or the Atman.

—Swami Tyagisananda, *Primer of Vedanta*, 77

2. James D Watson, *The Double Helix: A Personal Account of the Discovery of the Structure of DNA* (London: Penguin, 1999), 21.
3. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2004), 363.
4. See Swami Chetanananda, *They Lived with God* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2006), 144.
5. Matt Ridley, *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), 21.
6. The specific reference is to the ‘paired box gene 6’, also known as PAX6. This is a master gene which can develop into any organ. The gene of the eye of a mouse, also called an ‘eyeless gene’, is very similar to the same kind of master or eyeless gene of the eye of fruit fly. See ‘Horizontal Gene Transfer’ <<http://www.sci.sdsu.edu/~smaloy/MicrobialGenetics/topics/genetic-exchange/exchange/exchange.html>> accessed 17 October 2011.
7. William Shakespeare, *Tempest*, Act 4, Scene 1.
8. The famous verse in the poem referred to is: ‘Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting: / The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star, / Hath had elsewhere its setting, / And cometh from afar: / Not in entire forgetfulness, / And not in utter nakedness, / But trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God who is our home: / Heaven lies about us in our infancy!’
9. *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species*, 127.
10. Richard Lewontin, *It Ain’t Necessarily So: The Dream of the Human Genome and other Illusions* (London: Granta, 2001), 142.
11. Daniel C Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life* (London: Penguin, 1996), 151.
12. Swami Ranganathananda, *Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gita*, 3 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2000), 1.202–3.
13. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1994), 52.
14. Chandrashekhara Chattopadhyay, *Swami Adbhutananda as We Saw Him*, trans. Swami Satswarupananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2011), 60.
15. Bhagavadgita, 2.22.
16. Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces that Shape the Universe* (London: Phoenix/Orion, 2000), 96.

# ***Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – IV***

**Swami Bhajananda**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

## ***(ii) Community of Lay Devotees***

**A** PART FROM THE YOUNG unmarried disciples who later became monks, Sri Ramakrishna had a large number of householder disciples who were also spiritual seekers. After the passing of the Master some of these householders lived without any contact with the monks. But the others rallied around the fledgling monastic Order and supported it as much as it was possible for them.<sup>8</sup> When the monastic Order became fully established, with a new lineage of gurus, more and more people came to be closely associated with the Order. In this way a community of lay devotees gradually took shape. It now consists of lakhs of devotees held together by their love for, and the love of, Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji.

Although this community is not well organized like the monastic Order and its boundaries are not quite distinct, what we have written about the Order applies, to a lesser degree, to the lay community as well. Like the monks, the lay devotees also are sincere spiritual seekers and many of them practise spiritual disciplines under the guidance of a monastic guru.

Sri Ramakrishna placed the ideal of God realization before both monks and householders. In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* he repeatedly gives the assurance that it is also possible for householders to realize God. In fact, he seems to have held the view of liberation of all, *sarva-mukti*. He states: 'All will surely realize God. All will be

liberated. It may be that some get their meal in the morning, some at noon, some in the evening; but none will go without food. All, without any exception, will certainly know their real Self.'<sup>9</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna is the supreme ideal for monks as well as householders. He did not encourage any of his householder disciples to become sannyasins. He did not regard the householder's life as a preparation for sannyasa; rather, he regarded it as an independent path, as the ancient Vedic sages did. The sages we meet in the Upanishads, known as rishis, were mostly married people; nevertheless, they lived a life of self-control and attained spiritual illumination. Sri Ramakrishna has recovered the rishi ideal for modern people. He taught that householders should practise self-control, discrimination, prayer, and discharge the duties of life depending fully on God.

The lay devotees of Sri Ramakrishna form a unique community. They belong to all castes, religions, races, and nationalities. They provide the main support to the monastic Order, cooperate with the monks in different ways, and many of them render voluntary service at the centres of the Order. Through them too the message of Sri Ramakrishna is spreading in different parts of India and the world.

## ***(iii) Other Streams of the Ramakrishna Movement***

Apart from the Ramakrishna Order, the parallel women's Order—which runs on similar

lines—and the community of lay devotees attached to both, there are various other independent institutions founded in the name of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, or Swami Vivekananda that follow their message in various ways. There are also hundreds of people who are inspired by the lives and teachings of the Holy Trio but do not associate themselves with any institution.

All these institutions and people mentioned above together constitute the Ramakrishna Movement. This movement is gradually spreading, without much propaganda, in different parts of India and the world. The Ramakrishna Movement is the most visible and permanent product of the spiritual renaissance associated with the name of Sri Ramakrishna. It is the main channel by which Sri Ramakrishna's message is spreading and is the chief means of sustaining it. Apart from this, there are several factors that give the Ramakrishna Movement an important place in the annals of recent history.

In the first place, it has prepared the ground for the continuity of Indian spirituality into the unknown future centuries. Secondly, it has made available the highest spiritual truths in a simple form to the common people. Thirdly, the Ramakrishna Movement serves as a permanent, universal base for bringing about harmony of religions, harmony of religion and science, and harmony of cultures.

### ***7. Strengthening the Moral Foundations of Culture and Spirituality***

Yet another noteworthy feature of the spiritual renaissance associated with the name of Sri Ramakrishna is that it has boosted the moral convictions of the Indian people, strengthened the moral foundations of Indian culture, brought about a thorough purification of spiritual practices, and established the spiritual ideal on the twin foundations of purity and selflessness.

Swami Vivekananda has stated that Buddha's great contribution to Indian culture was to give it a strong moral foundation. Before Buddha, Vedic culture was dominated by the spiritual ideal. Spirituality then was so strong that morality was followed as a matter of course. In Indian culture morality was originally a by-product of spirituality. When Vedic culture declined Buddhism provided the moral foundation for Indian culture. The subsequent decline of Buddhism, repeated invasions, and endless internal wars disrupted the whole social fabric and weakened the morale and collective will of the nation.

After a long time Sri Ramakrishna came and gave a moral orientation to Indian culture and strengthened the moral foundations of spirituality through his life and teachings. It may not be an exaggeration to say that after Buddha no other great spiritual teacher or prophet in India gave so much importance to morality as Sri Ramakrishna did—fifty years after Sri Ramakrishna's passing Mahatma Gandhi came and boosted the moral fibre of the nation still further.

Sri Ramakrishna stressed three primary virtues: renunciation of lust, *kāma* or *kāmini*, renunciation of filthy lucre, *kāñcan* or gold, and observance of truthfulness. His teachings on morality are to be understood in the right perspective. In the first place, his advice to renounce *kāmini-kāñcan* was meant for sincere spiritual seekers who were eager to realize God. He did not give this advice to wealthy people like Mathur Babu. He was not against marriage or acquisition of wealth. He never advised or allowed householders to renounce family and wealth. He once told two doctors:

But renunciation of 'woman and gold' is not for you. You may renounce them mentally. That is why I said to the goswamis: 'Why do you speak of renunciation? That will not do for you. You have to attend the daily worship

of Shyamasundar.' Total renunciation is for sannyasis. ... You should not renounce woman completely. It is not harmful for a householder to live with his wife. But after the birth of one or two children, husband and wife should live as brother and sister' (874).

On another occasion he said to householders: 'Again I say, why should you give up the world? You will find it more convenient at home. You won't have to worry about food. You may even live with your wife. It isn't harmful. You will have near at hand all that the body needs at different times. When you are ill, you will have someone near you to nurse you' (627).

Sri Ramakrishna only wanted that the animal instincts and drives lodged in the depths of the mind should be kept under control. Giving free licence to animal instincts harms not only the individual but the whole society. The enormous increase in the incidence of crime, violence, immorality, alcoholism, drug abuse, break-up of family life, and so forth in the modern world is the social consequence of unbridled pursuit of lust and lucre.

Sri Ramakrishna's teaching on *kāminī*, which is usually and rather inappropriately translated as 'woman', has caused much misunderstanding. The word literally means 'object of desire'. When understood in the light of his own life and the lives of the Holy Mother and Swamiji, what the teaching seems to imply is as follows: Every woman should be looked upon not as a *kāminī* but as the embodiment of divine motherhood and should be treated with respect. Indeed, if every man could see the divine light and not the skin and flesh in every woman, it would sanctify human relationships, ennoble human life, and elevate human society.

Regarding wealth, what Sri Ramakrishna condemned was inordinate greed and attachment to wealth, as well as making the acquisition of

wealth the sole aim of life. He was also against the misuse of money for luxuries and for pomp and show. He wanted that money should be properly used for the maintenance of one's family and for serving holy men and poor people. Some of his statements on this subject deserve special attention. 'Money enables a man to get food and drink, build a house, worship the Deity, serve devotees and holy men, and help the poor when he happens to meet them. These are the good uses of money. Money is not meant for luxuries or creature comforts or for buying a position in society' (285). 'Then mustn't one perform acts of compassion, such as charity to the poor? I do not forbid it. If a man has money, he should give it to remove the sorrows and sufferings that come to his notice. In such an event the wise man says, "Give the poor something." But inwardly he feels: "What can I do? God alone is the doer. I am nothing"' (379). 'You see, he alone is a true man who has made money his servant. But those who do not know the use of money are not men even though they have human forms' (637).

Sri Ramakrishna's teaching on truthfulness is a self-evident truth in itself and needs no elaboration. All the laws of the universe and the laws of life are only manifestations of the one great universal law of Truth. All the success we attain in life is the result of the success of some truth or other, and all our failures in life are the result of our failure to follow the law of truth pertaining to the particular field. This is true of individual life as well as collective life. '*Satyameva jayate*; Truth alone triumphs' is India's national motto. Most of the failures of India in different fields are caused by its failure to fulfil the stringent conditions of the motto.

We have discussed at length the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna on morality for two reasons. One reason is to show the moral significance of Sri Ramakrishna's avatarhood for the whole



Indian nation. The spiritual renaissance that originated in the middle of the nineteenth century was followed by a political resurgence led by a galaxy of great political leaders, with Gandhiji at their centre. After independence came an agricultural revolution and social transformation, which is still going on. In the last decade of the twentieth century began the electronic revolution, which has enabled India to emerge from the backwoods of poverty and catch up with advanced countries. We are now in the thick of the 'knowledge revolution'. All that we need now is a 'moral revolution'. Here it may not be an overstatement to say that Sri Ramakrishna has sown the seeds of such a moral revolution. Owing to the social and political turmoil going on in India, this fact has not received much attention. As the Russian born Harvard sociologist Pitrim Sorokin has shown, the whole human society can be reconstructed on the basis of the spiritual and moral ideas. Swami Vivekananda has also said: "The life of Sri Ramakrishna proves that the greatest breadth, the highest catholicity and the utmost intensity can exist side by side in the same individual, and that society also can be constructed like that, for society is nothing but an aggregate of individuals."<sup>10</sup>

The second reason for discussing Sri Ramakrishna's moral teachings is their importance in providing a strong moral foundation to spiritual life. Although his moral teachings can be applied to the social and cultural fields, their main application is in the spiritual field. Sri Ramakrishna's primary interest was in spiritual life, and his teachings on renunciation of lust and lucre and on observance of truthfulness are primarily meant to help spiritual aspirants build their spiritual life on a firm moral foundation. In spiritual life mere morality is not enough. It serves only as the first step. Spiritual life becomes fruitful only if the mind is thoroughly purified. This is what Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples

taught, and it is the main guiding principle for spiritual life in the Ramakrishna Movement. All the saints, sages, and mystics of the world religions concur with this principle. But in modern times there is a growing tendency to follow spiritual practices, or claim to have spiritual experiences, without making any attempt to purify the mind or even to lead a moral life. Sometimes morally aberrant practices are followed in the name of spiritual life. In this world of shadows the blazing purity of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swamiji shines as a great light guiding genuine seekers along the right path.

### ***8. Manifestation of Divine Glory in the Human Being***

One of the fundamental tenets of Vedanta is that the ultimate Reality, known as Brahman, is both immanent and transcendent—*antarbahisca*, inside and outside—and that a person's true Self, the Atman, is an inseparable part or reflection of the immanent Brahman. This means every human being has within him or her a centre of divine power, and the glory of Brahman or God is manifesting itself through that centre. Although all Vedantic scriptures like the Upanishads and the Gita proclaim this enlightening idea, its practical application in the life of the common people in the modern world was left to Sri Ramakrishna to teach.

The Upanishads give almost equal importance to both the aspects of Brahman. But the traditional Advaitins gave greater importance to the transcendent aspect; and instead of stressing the immanent aspect of Brahman, they stressed the illusoriness of the world. Sri Ramakrishna stressed the immanent aspect of Brahman and thus restored the balanced vision of the Vedic seers.

In this context a question arises: Why was the immanent aspect of Brahman not stressed in traditional Advaita? The goal of traditional Advaita is mukti, and this is attained by the

realization of the oneness of the *jivātman* and Brahman by the complete destruction of causal ignorance, *kāraṇa ajñāna*. The experience of Advaita, or non-dualism, is the highest point of spiritual experience; there cannot be any *higher* experience than Advaita. According to Shankara, with the non-dual experience of Brahman mukti takes place instantaneously: there is no time-gap between the two. Since mukti is the ultimate goal of life, and Advaitic knowledge is the highest experience, there is nothing more to attain in life once they are attained. This is the view of traditional Advaitins.

Sri Ramakrishna accepts Advaita as the *highest* form of realization. But according to him, attaining mukti, which means one's own personal salvation or liberation, need not necessarily be the ultimate goal of life for all people. Some souls, after having the highest realization of the non-dual transcendent Brahman—which Sri Ramakrishna calls *jñāna*—return to the earthly plane, by the will of God, out of compassion for suffering humanity. They realize that the transcendent Brahman is also immanent in creation and that all objects in the universe are nothing but different manifestations of Brahman. This integral realization of Brahman was called *vijñāna* by Sri Ramakrishna. The realization of the transcendent Brahman, *jñāna*, is attained by the process of negation '*neti, neti*', whereas the realization of the immanent Brahman, *vijñāna*, is attained by the process of affirmation '*iti, iti*'.<sup>11</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna explains the above view as follows.


The jnani gives up his identification with worldly things, discriminating, 'Not this, not this'. Only then can he realize Brahman. It is like reaching the roof of a house by leaving the steps behind, one by one. But the vijnani, who is more intimately acquainted with Brahman, realizes something more. He realizes that the

steps are made of the same materials as the roof: bricks, lime, and brick-dust. That which is realized intuitively as Brahman, through the eliminating process of 'Not this, not this', is then found to have become the universe and all its living beings. The vijnani sees that the Reality which is nirguna, without attributes, is also saguna, with attributes.<sup>12</sup>

It was from his experience of *vijñāna* that Sri Ramakrishna developed his concept of the inherent divinity of the human being. He saw that although Brahman is immanent in the whole creation, He manifests himself in different ways and degrees in different beings. Brahman's highest manifestation is in the human being, who alone has the inherent capacity to realize his or her true nature as Atman/Brahman. Therefore, Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'If you seek God, then seek Him in man; He manifests Himself more in man than in any other thing' (726). Sri Ramakrishna looked upon his disciples and all others as manifestations of God. He also held that all the achievements of human beings are the manifestations of God's glory.

However, he also held that although God is present in all human beings, the degree of manifestation is not the same in all people. In saints and holy people there is greater manifestation of God, and hence they should be shown greater respect. In wicked and immoral people God's manifestation is of a lesser degree and therefore one has to be careful in dealing with them. As Sri Ramakrishna put it: 'God is even in the tiger; but you cannot embrace the tiger on that account' (84). Furthermore, Sri Ramakrishna also taught that since the human being is the highest manifestation of God, service to people is to be considered service to God himself. This is his famous doctrine of *Śiva-jñāne jīva sevā*.

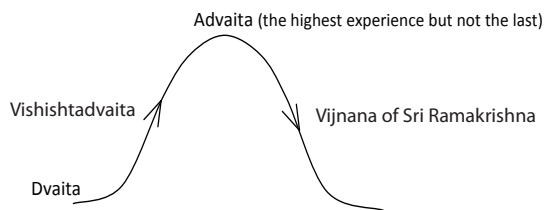
Sri Ramakrishna's doctrine that the highest manifestation of God's glories takes place through

the human soul, and that service to the human being is real worship of God, forms the culminating point of the spiritual renaissance associated with Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda made these two concepts the cornerstone of his philosophy of Practical Vedanta, the guiding principle for all his programmes to uplift the poor masses of India and the basis of all the service activities of the Ramakrishna Mission. 

### Notes and References

8. At that crucial juncture the Holy Mother Sarada Devi provided great support to the young monks. Her association with the monastic Order and her role as the 'Mother of all' helped much to establish a strong rapport between the monks and lay devotees.
9. *Gospel*, 818.
10. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 7.412.
11. Sri Ramakrishna's concept of *viññāna* is sometimes confused with Ramanuja's qualified monism, Vishishtadvaita, but the two are

quite different. Ramanuja does not accept the *nirguṇa* aspect of Brahman, nor does he regard the Advaitic experience as the highest. Sri Ramakrishna accepts both *saguna* and *nirguṇa*, and both Vishishtadvaita and Advaita. The experience of *viññāna* is something that comes *after* the Advaitic experience. It is a more integral and advanced experience than the Advaitic. Swami Vivekananda regarded Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita, and Advaita as three stages in the realization of Brahman. *Viññāna* is not a return to the Vishishtadvaita or Dvaita stage; it is a new, more advanced stage. Advaita is the *highest*, but not the *last* stage; *viññāna* lies beyond it. The whole range of Vedantic experiences may be represented in the form of a bell-shaped diagram shown below.



12. *Gospel*, 103-4.

**S**ri Ramakrishna differed radically from the conventionally pious religious men of all nations, who look only to the external 'sins' of others and not to their inward states of openness to reform. What they fail to realize is that the 'sinner' may be closer to redemption than many a solid citizen who, while he may have avoided committing public offense, yet lives perversely cut off from the wellsprings of joy, love, and truth within himself. It is for this reason that the great sages have always looked more to the motivations of their fellow men than to their outward actions. Far be it from a Christ of the whores and publicans and a Ramakrishna to hold themselves aloof from the foibles of flesh and blood.

But if these holy men mixed with sinners, scrubbed the wounds of lepers, and mopped the mud huts of untouchables with their long matted hair, they did these things not to uplift or to purify or to set a good

example for others. They did it because they felt every festering uncleanness of the body or spirit of every man, woman, and child to be their own. They bore the sins of the world in their own being—and not just metaphorically, not in some magical or supernatural sense, not in a single transcendental moment of sacrifice nailed to the bloody lumber of cruelty and ignorance, but every moment, in the living awareness of their unity with humankind. They bore our sins not in their dying, but in every moment of their living among us, in every tender moment of reaching out to suffering humanity. And because they understood us perfectly, because they felt every wrong turn of our body, mind, and spirit viscerally in their own being, they did not condemn—they were far too practical for that. They alleviated.

—Richard Schiffman

*Sri Ramakrishna: A Prophet for the New Age*, 122-3

# Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels

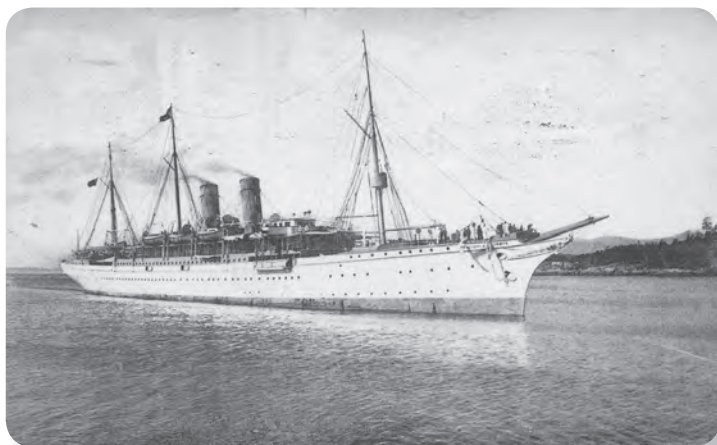
Somenath Mukherjee

(Continued from the previous issue)

## The Empress of India<sup>13</sup>

THE *EMPRESS OF INDIA* TOOK the swami to the Western shore. Its full name was RMS *Empress of India*, built by the Naval Construction & Armament Co., Barrow, England, which till 1888 was known as the 'Barrow Shipbuilding Company', and along with the passenger and cargo ships also built large warships. The *Empress of India*, the first of the two vessels of the Canadian Pacific Steamship, was of historical significance as it was prefixed RMS, which means Royal Mail Ship. Only ships entrusted to carry British mails could use such a prefix; others used merely SS, meaning Steamship. In 1891 the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), owner of the Canadian Pacific Steamship, had a contract with the British Government to provide a subsidized mail service between Britain and Hong Kong via Canada. Hence, this route saw the advent of three specially designed ocean liners of which the RMS *Empress of India* was the first one, followed by the RMS *Empress of China* and the RMS *Empress of Japan*. This was the genesis of the CPR Trans-Pacific fleet, which would adhere to this route for the next half century.

To begin her trans-Pacific saga, the *Empress of India* came to Vancouver. But before that happened her keel was laid in 1890, and she was launched on 30 August 1890 by Lady Louise Egerton, the sister of Lord Harrington. This 5,905 ton vessel had a length of 455.6 feet with a



Postcard of the Empress of India

width stretching to 51.2 feet. The graceful white-painted, clipper-bowed ship had two buff-coloured funnels with a band of black paint at the top and three lightweight schooner type masts. Her average speed was 16 knots. The *Empress of India*, along with her two sister ships, was the first vessel equipped with twin propellers with matching engines. She had a capacity to accommodate 50 first-class, 150 second-class, and 400 steerage or third-class passengers. On 8 February 1891 the *Empress of India* left Liverpool on its maiden voyage via Suez to Hong Kong and Vancouver. She reached Vancouver on 28 April 1891. This was the beginning of her regular route sailing from Hong Kong-Shanghai-Nagasaki-Kobe-Yokohama-Vancouver and back. In those early days of wireless telegraphy the call sign established for the *Empress of India* was 'MPI'. Besides, there were incidents that though they may not appear remarkable today have their distinct link with the history of the *Empress of India*. One such incident was when a case of smallpox was detected among the passengers on board. The ailing passenger was journeying from Hong



Kong to Kobe, and as a consequence the *Empress* was quarantined in Yokohama until the incubation period of the disease had passed.

On 18 August 1903 the *Empress of India* had its share of ill luck. The *New York Times* on the following day headlined: 'CHINESE CRUISER SUNK: Captain and Fourteen Men Go Down with the Huang-Tai. The Steamship Empress of India in Collision with the Warship near Hong-kong [*sic*]'—Many Rescues.' Thereafter the news, under dateline 18 August, followed:

The Canadian Pacific Railroad's steamship Empress of India (from Vancouver, B. C., July 27, and Yokohama, Aug. 10, for Hongkong [*sic*]) was in collision near this port to-day with the Chinese cruiser Huang-Tai. The warship sank an hour after the collision.

The Empress of India saved 170 of the crew of the cruiser. The Captain of the Huang-Tai, who refused to leave his ship, and thirteen of her crew were drowned. The Empress of India was badly damaged amidships.<sup>14</sup>

A recently published book gave more specific reasons behind the collision: 'About 150 miles north of Hong Kong in clear weather the two ships were on parallel courses with *Empress of India* gradually overtaking the cruiser. When they were nearly even, *Huang Tai* turned to starboard as though to cross *India's* bow. It struck a glancing blow on *India's* port side appearing to do a little damage. However, *Huang Tai* must have lost several plates below the surface, for it filled rapidly and sank within 19 minutes.'<sup>15</sup> As regards the impact on the *Empress on India*, on 26 August 1903 the *New York Times* wrote: 'The Cost of the repairs to the Canadian Pacific Railroad's steamer Empress of India ... is estimated at \$20,000. This is exclusive of the damage to her propeller blades.'<sup>16</sup>

Despite this mishap, the *Empress* continued to be in service, on the same route, until she was

sold to the Maharaja of Gwalior on 7 December 1914. But there was a specific reason behind this transfer of ownership. In 1908 the new mail contract between Vancouver and Yokohama called for a reduction in the crossing time from 12 days to 10.5 days putting severe stress on the *Empress's* capabilities. This made the Canadian Pacific order new and capable vessels, which finally were introduced in 1912. On acquiring the *Empress of India* the Maharaja of Gwalior had her converted into an Indian Army hospital ship and renamed her *Loyalty*. Therefore, with a new name and changed assignment the erstwhile *Empress of India* began her second life on 19 January 1915 and ran mainly between Bombay and Mesopotamia. In March 1919 her use as an army hospital ship came to an end, and once again she went to a different owner. This time it was the Scindia Steam Navigation Company of Bombay, which put her to their Bombay-Marseilles service. Untiringly the ship ran that route for eighteen months without yielding any profit to the company. With no further prospects the once majestic *Empress of India* was laid up for a period off Elephanta Island in Bombay—as if she had nothing more to do than bask in her glittering past when once she carried aboard an Indian monk to the Western shore, and with him the spiritual treasures of his ancient civilization.

In February 1923 destiny ended the *Empress of India's* mortal existence: she was sold for scrap and, as fate would have it, was broken to pieces by Maneckchand Jiray of Bombay. But, how curiously, she chose India as her final resting place!

### The Interlude

On reaching Chicago Vivekananda was confronted with situations for which his earlier life had hardly prepared him. But it was not long when, on 2 October 1893, he summed up his

position in a letter to Haridas Viharidas Desai: 'I now clearly see that He who was guiding me on the snow tops of the Himalayas and the burning plains of India is here to help me and guide me. ... His *will be done!*'<sup>17</sup> Almost in echoing confidence he assured his Madras disciples on 2 November 1893: 'Day by day I am feeling that the Lord is with me, and I am trying to follow His direction. His will be done. ... We will do great things for the world, and that for the sake of doing good and not for name and fame' (5.23).

Some fifteen years after Vivekananda first landed on the Western shore, an eyewitness to his deeds in the West expressed her views: 'It required tremendous courage to venture forth on such a mission. ... Alone among strangers, thousands of miles from his own country, it was a situation to daunt even a strong man; but the Swami left the matter in the hands of the Lord, firm in his faith that Divine protection would never fail him.'<sup>18</sup> And the history has it that: 'Unknown and ignored, he entered the lecture hall of the great metropolis of Chicago in 1893. He left that hall an adored hero. He spoke. It was enough. The depth of his great soul had sounded forth, and the world felt the vibration. One single man changed the current of thought of half the globe—that was his work.'<sup>19</sup>

In this way, with friends and foes almost in abundance, Vivekananda moved ceaselessly in the US with a mission that, after the initial turbulence, finally centred on spreading the message of Vedanta. As his days in America went on, his detractors, to a great extent, were replaced by ever increasing friends and followers who played a pivotal role during his life in the West. Many among them closely linked themselves with his mission, even when he was no more. Among them was the Leggett family. When Francis H Leggett and Betty Sturges, whose younger sister was Josephine Macleod,

decided to get married in Paris, they invited the swami to be present as their special guest. Since at that time Vivekananda also had a few invitations from England to deliver lectures, he decided to grant their request.

Thus, on 17 August 1895, two strange friends, one a rich American businessman about to marry and the other an Indian monk, sailed together from New York to Paris. The marriage was fixed on 9 September 1895. Betty and Josephine were already in Paris for pre-marriage shopping. The journey across the Atlantic to Le Havre, meaning 'the harbour' in French, in north-western France began in the SS *La Touraine*. Since during both of his visits to the West the swami had travelled along this transatlantic route five times, thrice towards Europe and twice to the US, we prefer to include some information on this famous route. A chronicler writes: 'For a century and a half, a single most important sea lane in the world was the transatlantic route linking the Old World and the New. Governments formulated their foreign policies around it, nations' economies were dependent on it, navies were built to protect—or interdict—it, wars were fought over it, empires rose because they controlled it, and fell because they didn't.'<sup>20</sup>

### La Touraine

The known history of transatlantic lines began in 1818 with the Black Ball Line, owned by C H Marshall & Co., embarking on a regular service from the US to England. Steamships came in the 1930s and began to dominate transatlantic passenger and mail transport market. With the beginning of pleasure cruises in 1844 the industry took a turn, and in the 1850s and 1860s the quality of passenger voyages improved dramatically, with luxuries like electric lights, additional deck space, and various entertainments thrown in. It is learnt that: 'North Atlantic steamships were

called liners because they achieved a line voyage, from point A to point B, from Liverpool to New York or, conversely, from New York to Liverpool or Le Havre or Rotterdam or Bremerhaven or Genoa. New York was indisputably the western terminus for all transatlantic lines.<sup>21</sup>

Compagnie Générale Maritime, a French undertaking, had its beginning in 1855. Their initial services were limited to Rouen and Algeria, Le Havre and Hamburg, and Marseilles and Antwerp, with calls at Spanish and Portuguese ports. In 1861 the company changed its name to the present one, Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (CGT), more popularly known as the French Line, and undertook its first contract for the carriage of the French mails to the United States, the Antilles, and Mexico. The vessels of the company engaged in the New York route were mostly built in the 1860s and were fine specimens of the naval architecture of those days. In the early part of the 1880s acceleration and improvement in the service became imperative; consequently, more sophisticated and larger vessels began to join the company's fleet. This finally led to the advent of

*La Touraine*, the first twin-propeller steamer of the French Line; its success was instant. Gradually, a few more similar ships were added, new postal contracts were made, and under its revised terms larger and faster ships became necessary.

Before the 1890s the French Line had to plan for a new ship that would, with improved facilities and increased technical abilities, also ensure the tradition of elegance and service. Prompted by such plan a new ship was finally launched on 23 March 1890 and was christened *La Touraine*. When *La Touraine* left its mother dock and rolled out to sea, she was the sixth largest ship ever built—the bigger five were *Great Eastern*, *City of Paris*, *City of New York*, *Majestic*, and *Teutonic*. Her length was 536 feet, with 56 feet beam and 9,047 gross tonnage; the two propellers were powered by triple expansion steam engines that helped *La Touraine* to have a service speed of 19 knots. The ship could carry a total of 1,090 passengers. Her maiden voyage from Le Havre to New York, was completed on 20 June 1891, in just six days, seventeen hours, and thirty minutes.



La Touraine



It was not long before *La Touraine*, with her handsome lines, two widely spaced squat funnels, and appealing appearance, became one of the most popular liners on the North Atlantic. More so, with her fast speed and excellent steadiness even in rough weather she earned the nickname of ‘steady ship’. We have found that in a transatlantic crossing in July 1892 she could clock up a record speed of 21.2 knots over the measured mile. The French Line, however, presumably obsessed with their high quality service, decided to further stabilize the ship. They overhauled her twice, in 1900 and in 1902, fitted bilge keels to the bottom of the hull and, as a result, *La Touraine* became ‘as smooth as an iron over a linen cloth’. During the said overhaul one of her three original masts was removed and the capacity of carrying third-class passengers was increased from 600 to 1,000, but in the process the ship’s gross tonnage went down to 8,429.

In January 1903 *La Touraine* faced a serious fire at Le Havre that entirely ruined her grand staircase as well as the first class dining saloon and cabins. Following necessary repairs the ship resumed her service and became even more dashing. Record has it that:

*La Touraine* was one of the first French ships to boast an outstanding kitchen. Just as on the much later *Île de France* and *Normandie*, she attracted gourmets from all over the world. She was also one of the first French liners to be called ‘a piece of France itself’. The company slogan at the time was ‘You are in France as soon as you cross the gangplank!’ *La Touraine* was also the first ship with the modern Cabin Class—merging first and second class in 1910. In the old days, the term ‘Cabin Class’ was associated with old, surpassed vessels, but now it started a new era. Together with the new CGT-liners *Chicago* and *Rochambeau*, *La Touraine* sailed into many more successful years of French service.

In 1912, *La Touraine* made some special Canadian voyages between Le Havre and Halifax and a year later she was placed on the Québec and Montreal summer service. During World War I, *La Touraine* served as an armed merchant cruiser and later as a troop ship. When the war was over she continued for some years in French Line service, but as the ship began showing signs of age in 1922 she was sold and became a grey-hulled hotel ship in Göteborg, Sweden, during the Industrial and Agricultural Fair. For this occasion *La Touraine* was renamed *Maritime*. In August she was again offered for sale, and that October she was sold to the breakers at Dunkerque.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Journey**

At 12.45 p.m. on 17 August 1895, the very date he boarded *La Touraine* for Paris, Vivekananda sent a telegram to Christine Greenstidel, his Detroit disciple: ‘SWAMM [SWAMI] LEAVING SENDS YOU AND MRS. FUNKEY [FUNKE] LOVE AND BLESSING.’<sup>23</sup> The ship took seven days to cross the Atlantic between the US and Europe to finally reach Le Havre. During the voyage the swami neither wrote any letter nor did he ever reminisce about the journey. This has deprived us of any intimate knowledge of his experience aboard *La Touraine*. However, as we said before, the amazing pair of friends, the monk and the businessman, finally landed at Le Havre on 24 August and without wasting time took an immediate train to Paris.

### **The Interlude**

As mentioned before, there were two reasons for the swami’s first visit to Europe. One was the marriage between Francis H Leggett and Betty Sturges, to which he was a special invitee; the other being invitations he had received from his English friends to begin his work in England. The marriage was held on 9 Monday September

at the American Cathedral, and on the next day Vivekananda left for England. There, according to his biography<sup>24</sup>, he initially 'stayed as a guest at Miss Henrietta Müller's place at Juan Duff House, Regent Street, Cambridge'. Later the 'Swami spent September and most of October living quietly in Reading [an ancient town in England about 40 miles from London]' as a guest of Mr and Mrs E T Sturdy. On 22 October he gave his first London lecture and seven days later, on 29 October, he began to live on his own for a month at 80 [presently 61], Oakley Street, Chelsea, London. We may use a few quotes from the swami's letters to have a sketchy idea of his initial work in London. On 6 January 1896 he recalled his London days in a letter to Mary Hale: 'I had eight classes a week apart from public lectures, and they were so crowded that a good many people, even ladies of high rank, sat on the floor and did not think anything of it.'<sup>25</sup> This excludes his other invited lectures and talks at clubs, societies, and private drawing rooms during one of which, on a cold Sunday afternoon in November, Margaret Elizabeth Noble, more well known as Sister Nivedita, first came in contact with him.

On 18 November, a little more than a week before he ended his first visit to England, the swami wrote to Alasinga Perumal: 'In England my work is really splendid, I am astonished myself at it' (5.97). But whatever success he had in England and, more so, whatsoever was its apparent potential, the subsequent lines in the letter still reverberate with his deep emotion: 'I have no time even to die, as the Bengalis say. I work, work, work, and earn my own bread and help my country, and this all alone. ... I am really tired from incessant work. Any other Hindu would have died if he had to work as hard as I have to. ... I want to go to India for a long rest' (5.97–8).

But the Lord had designed it otherwise; therefore, the most coveted rest and intense

homesickness had to wait, because he had less than seven years to live on this earth and the impending work was inestimable. On 27 November 1895 the swami sailed from London aboard the SS *Britannic* to take up the reins of his American work once again.

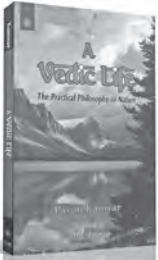
(To be continued)

## Notes and References

13. Information on the *Empress of India* has been taken mainly from: <[http://www.reference.com/browse/RMS\\_Empress\\_of\\_India\\_\(1891\)>](http://www.reference.com/browse/RMS_Empress_of_India_(1891)>), <[http://www.enotes.com/topic/RMS\\_Empress\\_of\\_India\\_\(1891\)>](http://www.enotes.com/topic/RMS_Empress_of_India_(1891)>), <<http://www.dock-museum.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=391>>, and <<http://www.merchantnavyofficers.com/cp73.html>> all accessed 22 October 2011.
14. <<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9E05E6D71339E333A2575AC1A96E9C946297D6CF>> accessed 6 September 2011.
15. E Mowbray Tate, *Transpacific Steamship: The Story of Steam Navigation from the Pacific Coast of North America to the Far East and the Antipodes* – 1867–1941 (New Jersey: Associated University, 1986), 151.
16. <<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F20F1FF73C5D11738DDDAF0A94D0405B838CF1D3>> accessed 6 September 2011.
17. *Complete Works*, 7.454.
18. Sara Ellen Waldo, 'Introductory Narrative' in *Inspired Talks* (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 1945), 1–2.
19. His Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2004), 378.
20. Daniel Allen Butler, *The Age of Cunard: A Transatlantic History 1839–2003* (Annapolis: Light-house, 2003), 11.
21. Violet Jessop and John Maxtone-Graham, *Titanic Survivor* (New York: Sheridan House, 1997), 7.
22. 'Ship Histories' under *La Touraine* at <<http://www.thegreatoceanliners.com/index2.html>> accessed 7 September 2011.
23. *Complete Works*, 9.70.
24. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.44, 47.
25. *Complete Works*, 8.369.
26. *Titanic Survivor*, 9.

# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## ***A Vedic Life: The Practical Philosophy of Nature***

Pawan Kanwar

New Age Books, A-44 Naraina Phase I,  
New Delhi 110 028. Website: [www.newagebooksindia.com](http://www.newagebooksindia.com). 2011. xix +  
163 pp. ₹ 225.

The book starts with an illuminating foreword by David Frawley, a well-known author of many books related to Vedic studies. The first part examines the homogeneity of the macrocosm and the microcosm from the standpoint of Vedanta and Sankhya metaphysics and also the science of mantras and devas. The author looks at cosmology, evolution, and history in a different way and shows how the various traits found in nature—like the three *gunas*, the Vedic gods Agni, Vayu, and Soma, the three levels of sound, and so on—are the cause of nature's evolution and involution.

The second part shows the application of the inclusive philosophy of the first part by bringing in Ayurveda, astronomy, yoga, yajna, and tantra. The idea is to make this philosophy relevant to the individual and also an aid to self-inquiry, besides conferring comprehensive health and spiritual uplift.

Samadhi is the deepest spiritual absorption spoken of in the scriptures; the author's views in the chapter on Yoga go against the traditional teachings when he states that trance is 'fleeting samadhi'. Moreover, the author's exegesis of Vedic direct perception, wherein Vedic sciences and knowledge are complete in themselves and can give fulfilment, automatically dismisses the view that it was Vedic ritualistic excessiveness that resulted in the reaction in the form of the Upanishads. Regarding the view of effectiveness of sound over the written script, as the basis of Vedic oral tradition and its relation to different devas,

the author unwittingly disregards the Vedic recognition of rationale and experience that advocates the importance of writing and material sciences. True insight must make Vedic principles also applicable to all the fields of human endeavour, only then would the author's expectation of a life based on Vedic knowledge and philosophy can materialize.

The limited glossary could have been expanded to help readers not conversant with many Sanskrit terms and concepts. Following the proper style, references could have been given to make this scholarly work more accurate. Except for a few typos and syntactical errors the book is remarkably original.

*Kamalika Mazumder*

MPhil in History, Calcutta University



## ***You Can Make a Difference***

J P Vaswani

Sterling Paperbacks, A-59 Okhla  
Industrial Area, Phase II, New Delhi  
110 020. Website: [sterlingpublishers.com](http://sterlingpublishers.com). 2006. 176 pp. ₹ 100.

The subtitle 'Stories that Touch the Heart' has a descriptive and appealing hint of what this book is: a compilation of various short stories and anecdotes of J P Vaswani, compiled by Dr Prabha Sampath and Krishna Kumari.

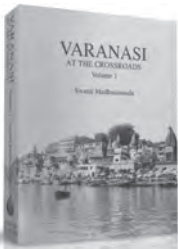
In this overtly technology dependent and digitalized age, abiding spiritual values are threatened in every corner of the human mind. Everything we think and do needs to be foolproof based on hard facts that 'sell'. As an antidote to this, each of the seventy-five stories of the book, which range from historical characters to ordinary people of all cultures, highlight an insight into human nature. There are tales also from the world of mythology that have been used to convey a spiritual bent of mind.

The robust optimism of Robert Louis Stevenson, the life of sacrifice of Dr Albert Schweitzer, the grit and determination of the African American athlete Jesse Owen, the quiet determination of Isis Johnson, and Swami Vivekananda's rock-solid love for suffering humanity are some of the examples found in the book. Mythological characters like Narada and Mother Ganga are used to illustrate the virtue of patience. Above all, the stories categorically try to inculcate a certain aspect of mental training. For instance, 'Just a Minute' describes a conversation between God and a person who wants a million dollars as soon as possible and who also reminds God that this amount is just a drop in his vast domain. God, using the same logic, replies that the person will have to wait for just a minute to get this money, which is going to be a million years!

The stories can be enjoyed by all age groups, particularly the youth, who seek stability in this fast-paced and confusing society they are inheriting. Besides, this book can provide positive fuel for community learning.

*Chaitali Maitra*

Lecturer, St Paul's and Presidency College, Kolkata



### **Varanasi at the Crossroads**

Swami Medhasananda

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata 700 029.  
Website: [www.sriramakrishna.org](http://www.sriramakrishna.org).  
2010. Second edition in 2 vols.  
xxxiii + 1,046 pp. ₹ 800.

Varanasi, or Kashi, is one of the most ancient cities of the world. It is not just a window to India's religion, history, culture, art, music, commerce, philosophy, and other diverse factors that make a civilization, but Varanasi is a microcosm in itself. While other cities have arisen and slowly disappeared, Varanasi has stood the test of time, keeping its hoary and holy grounds till today. Its inhabitants never abandoned the city, even in the most terrible conditions, rather they drew other people from all over India. The uninterrupted history of this city is staggering to conceive for historians, sociologists, and anthropologists. It was already ancient when Buddha came into it to preach. The

city is mentioned even in the earliest written texts, and it is extensively referred to in different kinds of literature. Varanasi is certainly one of the navels of India, an integral source of inspiration, strength, spirituality, learning, and all that has maintained the Vedic religion over thousands of years.

Swami Medhasananda, who is the present head of the Vedanta Society of Japan, has worked hard for more than twenty years, going through all the available records—religious and literary texts, Mughal and British accounts, municipal and censuses data—as well as interviews with scores of scholars and common people. This monumental work shows Varanasi in a kaleidoscopic form that attracts the reader's mind to its macro and micro aspects, while not losing sight of the essential character of the city: Shiva's eternal abode. The ingrained belief that this great God, manifestation of the ultimate Truth, guides and liberates all who die in Varanasi is what has drawn millions of devotees down the ages to this golden city of light. The city's *bhava* is what has kept it alive over the millennia. This *bhava* has been re-authenticated and re-established for present and future generations by Sri Ramakrishna's and Sri Sarada Devi's visions and experiences. All the apostles of the Great Master have also lived in Varanasi, thereby increasing its importance.

This second edition published in two volumes to make it more handy, has been slightly modified only in its bibliography. The author's diligent covering of all the aspects of the city's history and inhabitants, of every significant and insignificant structure down to the very stones of Varanasi, would have been impossible without a deep devotion for Shiva and his abode. For it is believed that '*Kashi ke kankar sab Shiva Shankar*'; the pebbles of Kashi are all Shiva Shankar'.

PB

### **BOOK RECEIVED**



### **Dewdrops of Love**

J P Vaswani

Sadhu Vaswani Centre, 127 Marshal Road, Singapore 424914. E-mail: [sadhuvaswani@pacific.net.sg](mailto:sadhuvaswani@pacific.net.sg). 2008. 128 pp.



# REPORTS

## **Commemoration of the 175th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna**

The following centres celebrated the 175th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. **Bengaluru:** devotional songs and discourses on 22 and 23 October 2011, in which about 3,000 persons attended; **Chandigarh:** talk on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna at Patiala on 13 October, attended by about 100 persons; **Lucknow:** musical performance on 1 October; **Raipur:** spiritual retreat on 2 October, in which 120 devotees participated; **Taki:** devotees' convention on 16 October, attended by some 200 devotees; **Thiruvananthapuram:** a day-long japa-yajna on 5 October, reading from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* on 6 October from morning to evening, discourses on the Bhagavata from 8 to 15 October, and devotees' convention on 15 and 16 October; **Vijayawada:** four quarterly three-day residential spiritual retreats during the year.

## **Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda**

UNESCO's headquarters at Paris inaugurated an exhibition on Swami Vivekananda on 13 October at the Town Hall of Paris. The inauguration was followed by a seminar where many dignitaries, including Swami Vitamohananda, head of the **Centre Védantique Ramakrishna, Gretch**, participated.

On 23 October **Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi**, organized a meeting where Sri Ajay Maken, union minister of the state for youth affairs and sports, released a five-episode animation film on the life of Swamiji. In the same meeting Sri Maken also handed over the Swami Vivekananda Award, instituted by the ashrama,



*Kumari Puja at Belur Math*

to four NGOs for their services to the poor and downtrodden in India. The centre also conducted a classical music concert on 30 October.

## **Durga Puja**

Durga Puja was celebrated at Belur Math from 3 to 6 October with due solemnity. Thousands of devotees attended the puja, with the Kumari Puja, performed on 4 October, and the Sandhi Puja, on that evening, drawing the largest crowds. Sri M K Narayanan, governor of West Bengal, attended the evening arati of the Divine Mother on Navami. Besides Doordarshan Kolkata, this year Doordarshan India also telecast live the puja at different times on all the days. Cooked prasad was served to about 49,000 devotees on Ashtami and to more than one lakh devotees during the four days.

Durga Puja in image was also performed at the following centres in India: Antpur, Asansol, Barasat, Contai, Cooch Behar, Dhaleswar (under Agartala), Ghatshila, Guwahati, Jalpaiguri, Jamshedpur, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Karimganj, Lucknow, Malda, Medinipur, Mumbai, Patna, Port Blair, Rahara, Shella (under Cherrapunji), Shillong, Silchar, and Varanasi Advaita Ashrama. Outside India: Durban, Geneva, Mauritius, Toronto, and nine centres of Bangladesh: Baliati, Barisal, Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Habiganj, Narayanganj, and Sylhet.

At **Dhaka** ashrama Ms Sheikh Hasina, prime minister of Bangladesh, Mr Shamsul Haq Tuku, state minister



for home affairs, and several other distinguished persons attended the Durga Puja celebration.

At **Shillong** ashrama Sri R S Mooshahary, governor of Meghalaya, Sri Bindu M Lanong, deputy chief minister of Meghalaya, and several other dignitaries attended the Durga Puja celebration.

### News from Branch Centres

Sri Ashok Gehlot, chief minister of Rajasthan, laid the foundation stone for the proposed Vivekananda Museum at **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Smriti Mandir, Khetri**, on 4 October.

On 9 October **Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar**, organized a blood donation camp, which was inaugurated by Sri Manik Sarkar, chief minister of Tripura. Fifty-two persons donated blood in the camp.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the newly built scholars' house and monks' quarters at **Ramakrishna Mission, Jammu**, on 22 October.

### Achievements

Jitu Suresh, a student of the school at **Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady**, has been awarded Dr Ambedkar Foundation Merit Award for securing the second rank among the tribal students in Kerala in the secondary examination 2010, conducted by the Kerala Board of Secondary Education. The award carries a sum of 50,000 rupees and a certificate of merit.



Ms Sheikh Hasina (left) at the Durga Puja celebrations at Dhaka

Nilanjan Ghosh Dastidar, a class-9 student of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar**, who stood first at the State Level Science Seminar Contest 2011, secured the second position at the National Level Science Seminar Contest, organized by the National Council of Science Museums at New Delhi on 30 September.

### Relief

**Flood Relief** • **Puri Mission** centre continued its primary relief work among the flood-affected people in Puri district. The centre distributed 9,905 kg chira, 608 kg sugar, 150 kg biscuits, 43 kg milk powder, and 1,500 candles among 2,480 flood-affected families of 29 villages in Gop, Kanas, and Delanga blocks of Puri district. **Naora** centre distributed 2,720 saris, 1,000 dhotis, and 100 chaddars to 3,720 flood-affected people of 16 villages in South 24-Parganas district.

**Distress Relief** • The following centres distributed various items to needy people. **Agartala**: 614 saris, 100 dhotis, and 307 sets of children's garments; **Garbeta**: 75 saris, 11 dhotis, 20 lungis, 60 shirts, 20 pants, 64 frocks, 25 vests, 10 churidars, and 35 children's garments; **Guwahati**: 350 saris and 25 dhotis; **Karimganj**: 255 saris and 145 dhotis; **Purulia**: 3,200 kg chira, 309 kg gur, and 1,450 kg sugar; **Taki**: 83 saris, 7 dhotis, 90 nail-cutters, 90 soap bars, and 90 tongue-cleaners.

**Rehabilitation Relief** • 166 houses built by **Mysore** centre for poor tribal people at Chamrajnagar district, in collaboration with the government of Karnataka, were formally handed over to the beneficiaries in August 2011.

PB



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

---

Volume 116 • January–December 2011

## Title Index

### A

Albert Einstein: Scientific Genius and Mystic — <i>Swami Atmajnanananda</i> ... ..	301
All Life is One — <i>Dr Valmiki Ghosh</i> ... ..	738
Ancient Wisdom for a Postmodern World — <i>Swami Sridharananda</i> ... ..	242

### B

Bhagavan Mahavira and Ramakrishna — <i>Prof. Manjula Bordia</i> ... ..	135
Bhakti — <i>Swami Durgananda</i> ... ..	626
Blessed Baba Raghunath Das, The — <i>Swami Videhatmananda</i> ... ..	475
Buddha's Middle Path and the Bhagavadgita — <i>Dr Rajeshri Trivedi</i> ... ..	549
Buddhist Approach to Deep Ecological Problems — <i>Rhyddhi Chakraborty</i> ... ..	581

### C

Carl Jung: Deconstructing the Reincarnation Myth — <i>Dr Pramila Davidson</i> ... ..	294
Coming for the Meditation but Staying for the Bowing — <i>Rev. Heng Sure</i> ... ..	142

### D

Dashavatara and Ramakrishna — <i>Swami Brahmeshananda</i> ... ..	76
Divine Body of Yugavatara Sri Ramakrishna, The — <i>Sudesh Garg</i> ... ..	719

### E

Editorial — <i>Swami Satyamayananda</i>	
Becoming the Glorious Light ... ..	233
Breaking the Mould ... ..	713
Call of the Eternal ... ..	473
Concord Through Bhakti ... ..	329

Eschewing Terra Incognita ... ..	377
Finding Our Roots ... ..	425
Flash Within, The ... ..	569
Habitat of the Divine, The ... ..	521
Most Ancient Story, The ... ..	281
One and the Many, The ... ..	617
Ramakrishna: Abode of all Felicity, Sri ... ..	5
Worship of the Age ... ..	665
Education for Enablement — <i>Pravrajika Brahmaprana</i> ... ..	575, 653

## F

Finding the Explanation: Interpreting Sri Ramakrishna — <i>Pravrajika Vrajaprana</i> ...	190
Five Great Sacrifices: Linking Ancient and Modern Hinduism, The — <i>Swami Samarpanananda</i> ... ..	483

## H

Highest Way of Serving, The — <i>Hariharan Nelliah</i> ... ..	634
Holy Mother's Concern for Common Persons — <i>Swami Tathagatananda</i> ... ..	725
How to Spiritualize Our Activities — <i>Swami Girishananda</i> ... ..	571
Human Development: Translating Vivekananda's Ideas into Numbers — <i>Prof. Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee</i> ... ..	353, 412

## I

In the Theatre of Bhakti: One Dance, Two Dancers — <i>Acharya Srivatsa Goswami</i> ... ..	157
Indian Influences on the Thai Language — <i>William Page</i> ... ..	539
Indian Peafowl in Sanskrit Literature and Tradition — <i>Dr Suruchi Pande</i> ... ..	346, 407
Influence of Sri Ramakrishna on the Hindi Poet Nirala — <i>Prof. Awadesh Pradhan</i> ... ..	104

## K

Kali: The Mysterious Primal Energy — <i>Swami Sandarshananda</i> ... ..	427
Kami Way: Shinto Religion of Japan, The — <i>Dr Dipak Sengupta</i> ... ..	336
Kashmir Shaivism in the Light of Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings — <i>Swami Tadananda</i> ... ..	86
Kodungalloor Bhagavati Kali Temple — <i>Santi Prasad Ghosal</i> ... ..	679
Krishna: Ideal Grihastha or Ideal Sannyasin?, Sri — <i>Swami Durgananda</i> ... ..	379
Kumbha Mela: Drawing Devout Millions — <i>Swami Nirgunananda</i> ... ..	694

## M

Magnitude of Ramakrishna's Life and Message, The — <i>Swami Chetanananda</i> ... ..	20
Mahendranath Gupta: Last Days with Sri Ramakrishna — <i>Swami Chetanananda</i> ... ..	268, 314
Making of Vivekananda: His Family's Role, The — <i>Dr Sukanya Ray</i> ... ..	341
Making Sri Ramakrishna One's Own — <i>Swami Bhuteshananda</i> ... ..	715
Many-splendoured Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta – XI, The — <i>Dr M Sivaramkrishna</i> ... ..	535



Meditation in Buddhism — <i>Dr Amartya Kumar Bhattacharya</i> ... ..	734
Mexico Rising: The Gods are Alive — <i>Elizabeth Usha Harding</i> ... ..	494
Mother's Laughter — <i>Joyesh Bagchi</i> ... ..	630
My Master, Swami Brahmananda — <i>Swami Prabhavananda</i> ... ..	523

## N

Narayana Guru's Idea of the Absolute, Sri — <i>Dr D Nirmala Devi</i> ... ..	443
Natha Pantha: Order of the Primordial Shiva — <i>Dr Satish K Kapoor</i> ... ..	489, 552
Natural Way to Intimacy with God: Sri Ramakrishna's Gift, The — <i>Dr Rita D Sherma</i> ... ..	115

## O

Olive Wings — <i>Dr Alpana Ghosh</i> ... ..	397
---	-----

## P

Philip Glass on Sri Ramakrishna — <i>Dr Kusumita P Pedersen</i> ... ..	209
Practice of Modern Yoga: Sri Ramakrishna's Four Contributions, The — <i>Dr Christopher Key Chapple</i> ... ..	121
Puranas: Spirituality for the Masses — <i>Swami Samarpanananda</i> ... ..	672

## R

Ramakrishna and Sanatana Dharma, Sri — <i>Morari Bapu</i> ... ..	132
Ramakrishna and Sikhism, Sri — <i>Dr Vanita</i> ... ..	167
Ramakrishna and Sri Chinmoy, Sri — <i>Dr Kusumita P Pedersen</i> ... ..	109
Ramakrishna and the Experiential Basis of Vedantic Religious Pluralism, Sri — <i>Dr Jeffery D Long</i> ... ..	182
Ramakrishna in Contemporary Eyes, Sri — <i>Swami Vimalatmananda</i> ... ..	53
Ramakrishna on Himself, Sri — <i>Mohit Ranjan Das</i> ... ..	44, 259
Ramakrishna, Christ, and Divine Incarnation — <i>Father Paul Dupuis</i> ... ..	177
Ramakrishna: A Unique Phenomenon, Sri — <i>Swami Smaranananda</i> ... ..	7
Ramakrishna: A Wonderful Man, Sri — <i>Swami Nirantarananda</i> ... ..	64
Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age, Sri — <i>Swami Bhajanananda</i> ... ..	28, 248
Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – II, Sri — <i>Swami Bhajanananda</i> ... ..	360, 401
Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – III, Sri — <i>Swami Bhajanananda</i> ... ..	454, 502
Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – IV, Sri — <i>Swami Bhajanananda</i> ... ..	619, 699, 743
Ramakrishna's Legacy from Buddhist and Jain Perspectives, Sri — <i>Prof. Padmanabh S Jaini</i> ... ..	149
Ramakrishna's Parables for Soft Skills Development, Sri — <i>Dr Sumita Roy</i> ... ..	219
Ramakrishna's Sufi Sadhana, Sri — <i>Maulana Mubarak Karim Jawahar</i> ... ..	171
Relaxing into Meditation — <i>Ngakma Nor'dzin</i> ... ..	291
Relevance of the Mahabharata — <i>Dr Narendra Kohli</i> ... ..	687
Religious Pluralism and Inter-religious Dialogue — <i>Prof. Dilipkumar Mohanta</i> ... ..	638

Renewing the Study of Ramakrishna: A Proposal — <i>Fr Francis X Clooney</i> ... ..	203
Reports ... ..	229, 277, 325, 373, 420, 469, 517, 565, 613, 661, 708, 757
Reviews ... ..	224, 273, 321, 371, 416, 464, 515, 563, 606, 611, 659, 705, 755
Re-visioning Sri Ramakrishna Tantra — <i>Dr M Sivaramkrishna</i> ... ..	92
Rumour: An Irresistible Social Phenomenon — <i>Brahmachari Isharupachaitanya</i> ... ..	390

## S

Saint Catherine's Monastery — <i>Dr Dipak Sengupta</i> ... ..	586
Sarada Devi and the Truth — <i>Ben Todd Baker</i> ... ..	331
She Touched God: The Life of Sister Lalita — <i>Pravrajika Brahmaprana</i> ... ..	283
Significance of the Term <i>Putra</i> in Vedic Literature — <i>Kamalika Mazumder</i> 436, 510, 557, 601	
Simplicity in Holy Mother's Words — <i>Pritha Lal</i> ... ..	592
Spiritual Mind, The — <i>Fr Anthony Elenjimittam</i> ... ..	645
Spiritual Mother-lines in India and the West — <i>Dr Carol Lee Flinders</i> ... ..	213
Spiritual Training of the Mind — <i>Swami Ranganathananda</i> ... ..	235, 306, 366
Story of Shyampukur Bati, The — <i>Swami Narasimhananda</i> ... ..	384
Study of Humankind: The Question of Consciousness, A — <i>Prof. S C Malik</i> ... ..	642

## T

This Month ... ..	232, 280, 328, 376, 424, 472, 520, 568, 616, 664, 712
Tradition and Innovation in Spiritual Life — <i>Prof. Vijaya Kumar Murty</i> ... ..	542
Traditional Wisdom	
Agnostic's Kismet, An ... ..	471
Attaining Liberation Here ... ..	375
City of Brahman, The ... ..	663
Controlling Deities, The ... ..	327
Freedom From Desire ... ..	423
Inscrutable Reality, The ... ..	711
Nature of Consciousness ... ..	615
Purified Vision, The ... ..	231
Ramakrishna Panchavimshika, Sri ... ..	I
Self-Identification ... ..	519
Subtle Self, The ... ..	279
Universal Being, The ... ..	567

## U

Understanding <i>Bhāvamukha</i> : Sri Ramakrishna's Unique State of Consciousness	
— <i>Swami Atmapriyananda</i> ... ..	37, 255
Understanding Sri Ramakrishna — <i>Swami Prabhananda</i> ... ..	12

## V

Vedanta-sara — <i>Swami Bhaskareswarananda</i> ... ..	265, 312
---	----------

Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels — <i>Somenath Mukherjee</i> ... ..	667, 749
Vivekananda in India's Supreme Court Judgements, Swami — <i>Mohana Suryanarayanan</i> ... ..	446
Vivekananda's Concern for Common Humanity, Swami — <i>Swami Tathagatananda</i> ... ..	530, 595, 647
Vivekananda's Philosophy and Work, Swami — <i>Krishnakoli Bhattacharya</i> ... ..	730

## W

Women's Status in Buddhism — <i>Dr Chenchulakshmi Kolla</i> ... ..	682
--	-----

## Y

<i>Yoga-sahaya</i> Sri Ramakrishna — <i>Swami Vyomananda</i> ... ..	432
---	-----

# Author Index

## A

*Atmajnanananda, Swami*

Albert Einstein: Scientific Genius and Mystic ... ..	301
--	-----

*Atmapriyananda, Swami*

Understanding <i>Bhāvamukha</i> : Sri Ramakrishna's Unique State of Consciousness	37, 255
---	---------

## B

*Bagchi, Joyesh*

Mother's Laughter ... ..	630
--------------------------	-----

*Baker, Ben Todd*

Sarada Devi and the Truth ... ..	331
----------------------------------	-----

*Bapu, Morari*

Sri Ramakrishna and Sanatana Dharma ... ..	132
--	-----

*Bhajananda, Swami*

Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age ... ..	28, 248
--	---------

Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – II ... ..	360, 401
---	----------

Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – III ... ..	454, 502
--	----------

Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – IV ... ..	619, 699, 743
---	---------------

*Bhaskareswarananda, Swami*

Vedanta-sara ... ..	265, 312
---------------------	----------

*Bhattacharya, Dr Amartya Kumar*

Meditation in Buddhism ... ..	734
-------------------------------	-----

*Bhattacharya, Krishnakoli*

Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy and Work ... .. 730

*Bhuteshananda, Swami*

Making Sri Ramakrishna One's Own ... .. 715

*Bordia, Prof. Manjula*

Bhagavan Mahavira and Ramakrishna ... .. 135

*Brahmaprana, Pravrajika*

Education for Enablement ... .. 575, 653

She Touched God: The Life of Sister Lalita ... .. 283

*Brahmeshananda, Swami*

Dashavatara and Ramakrishna ... .. 76

## C

*Chakraborty, Rhyddhi*

Buddhist Approach to Deep Ecological Problems ... .. 581

*Chapple, Dr Christopher Key*

The Practice of Modern Yoga: Sri Ramakrishna's Four Contributions ... .. 121

*Chatterjee, Prof. Shoutir Kishore*

Human Development: Translating Vivekananda's Ideas into Numbers ... .. 353, 412

*Chetanananda, Swami*

The Magnitude of Ramakrishna's Life and Message ... .. 20

Mahendranath Gupta: Last Days with Sri Ramakrishna ... .. 268, 314

*Clooney, Fr Francis X*

Renewing the Study of Ramakrishna: A Proposal ... .. 203

## D

*Das, Mohit Ranjan*

Sri Ramakrishna on Himself ... .. 44, 259

*Davidson, Dr Pramila*

Carl Jung: Deconstructing the Reincarnation Myth ... .. 294

*Devi, Dr D Nirmala*

Sri Narayana Guru's Idea of the Absolute ... .. 443

*Dupuis, Father Paul*

Ramakrishna, Christ, and Divine Incarnation ... .. 177

*Durgananda, Swami*

Bhakti ... .. 626

Sri Krishna: Ideal Grihastha or Ideal Sannyasin? ... .. 379

## E

*Elenjimittam, Fr Anthony*

The Spiritual Mind ... .. 645



**F***Flinders, Dr Carol Lee*

Spiritual Mother-lines in India and the West ... .. 213

**G***Garg, Sudesh*

The Divine Body of Yugavatara Sri Ramakrishna ... .. 719

*Ghosal, Santi Prasad*

Kodungalloor Bhagavati Kali Temple ... .. 679

*Ghosh, Dr Valmiki*

All Life is One ... .. 738

*Ghosh, Dr Alpana*

Olive Wings ... .. 397

*Girishananda, Swami*

How to Spiritualize Our Activities ... .. 571

*Goswami, Acharya Srivatsa*

In the Theatre of Bhakti: One Dance, Two Dancers ... .. 157

**H***Harding, Elizabeth Usha*

Mexico Rising: The Gods are Alive ... .. 494

**I***Isharupachaitanya, Brahmachari*

Rumour: An Irresistible Social Phenomenon ... .. 390

**J***Jaini, Prof. Padmanabh S*

Sri Ramakrishna's Legacy from Buddhist and Jain Perspectives ... .. 149

*Jawahar, Maulana Mubarak Karim*

Sri Ramakrishna's Sufi Sadhana ... .. 171

**K***Kapoor, Dr Satish K*

Natha Pantha: Order of the Primordial Shiva ... .. 489, 552

*Kobli, Dr Narendra*

Relevance of the Mahabharata ... .. 687

*Kolla, Dr Chenchulakshmi*

Women's Status in Buddhism ... .. 682

**L***Lal, Pritha*

Simplicity in Holy Mother's Words ... .. 592

*Long, Dr Jeffery D*

Sri Ramakrishna and the Experiential Basis of Vedantic Religious Pluralism ... .. 182

## M

*Malik, Prof. S C*

Study of Humankind: The Question of Consciousness ... .. 642

*Mazumder, Kamalika*

Significance of the Term *Putra* in Vedic Literature ... .. 436, 510, 557, 601

*Mohanta, Prof. Dilipkumar*

Religious Pluralism and Inter-religious Dialogue ... .. 638

*Mukherjee, Somenath*

Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels ... .. 667, 749

*Murty, Prof. Vijaya Kumar*

Tradition and Innovation in Spiritual Life ... .. 542

## N

*Narasimhananda, Swami*

The Story of Shyampukur Bati ... .. 384

*Nelliah, Hariharan*

The Highest Way of Serving ... .. 634

*Nirantarananda, Swami*

Sri Ramakrishna: A Wonderful Man ... .. 64

*Nirgunananda, Swami*

Kumbha Mela: Drawing Devout Millions ... .. 694

*Nor'dzin, Ngakma*

Relaxing into Meditation ... .. 291

## P

*Page, William*

Indian Influences on the Thai Language ... .. 539

*Pande, Dr Suruchi*

Indian Peafowl in Sanskrit Literature and Tradition ... .. 346, 407

*Pedersen, Dr Kusumita P*

Philip Glass on Sri Ramakrishna ... .. 209

Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Chinmoy ... .. 109

*Prabhananda, Swami*

Understanding Sri Ramakrishna ... .. 12

*Prabhavananda, Swami*

My Master, Swami Brahmananda ... .. 523

*Pradhan, Prof. Awadesh*

Influence of Sri Ramakrishna on the Hindi Poet Nirala ... .. 104

## R

*Ranganathananda, Swami*

Spiritual Training of the Mind ... .. 235, 306, 366

*Ray, Dr Sukanya*

Making of Vivekananda: His Family's Role ... .. 341

*Roy, Dr Sumita*

Sri Ramakrishna's Parables for Soft Skills Development ... .. 219

## S

*Samarpanananda, Swami*

The Five Great Sacrifices: Linking Ancient and Modern Hinduism ... .. 483

Puranas: Spirituality for the Masses ... .. 672

*Sandarshananda, Swami*

Kali: The Mysterious Primal Energy ... .. 427

*Satyamayananda, Swami*

Becoming the Glorious Light ... .. 233

Breaking the Mould ... .. 713

Call of the Eternal ... .. 473

Concord Through Bhakti ... .. 329

Eschewing Terra Incognita ... .. 377

Finding Our Roots ... .. 425

Sri Ramakrishna: Abode of all Felicity ... .. 5

The Flash Within ... .. 569

The Habitat of the Divine ... .. 521

The Most Ancient Story ... .. 281

The One and the Many ... .. 617

Worship of the Age ... .. 665

*Sengupta, Dr Dipak*

The Kami Way: Shinto Religion of Japan ... .. 336

Saint Catherine's Monastery ... .. 586

*Sherma, Dr Rita D*

The Natural Way to Intimacy with God: Sri Ramakrishna's Gift ... .. 115

*Sivaramkrishna, Dr M*

The Many-splendoured Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta – XI ... .. 535

Re-visioning Sri Ramakrishna Tantra ... .. 92

*Smaranananda, Swami*

Sri Ramakrishna: A Unique Phenomenon ... .. 7

*Sridharananda, Swami*

Ancient Wisdom for a Postmodern World ... .. 242

*Sure, Rev. Heng*

Coming for the Meditation but Staying for the Bowing ... .. 142

*Suryanarayanan, Mohana*

Swami Vivekananda in India's Supreme Court Judgements ... .. 446

## T

*Tadananda, Swami*

Kashmir Shaivism in the Light of Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings ... .. 86

*Tathagatananda, Swami*

Holy Mother's Concern for Common Persons ... .. 725

Swami Vivekananda's Concern for Common Humanity ... .. 530, 595, 647

*Trivedi, Dr Rajeshri*

Buddha's Middle Path and the Bhagavadgita ... .. 549

## V

*Vanita, Dr*

Sri Ramakrishna and Sikhism ... .. 167

*Videhatmananda, Swami*

The Blessed Baba Raghunath Das ... .. 475

*Vimalatmananda, Swami*

Sri Ramakrishna in Contemporary Eyes ... .. 53

*Vrajaprana, Pravrajika*

Finding the Explanation: Interpreting Sri Ramakrishna ... .. 190

*Vyomananda, Swami*

Yoga-sahaya Sri Ramakrishna ... .. 432

## Book Reviews

Alayam: The Hindu Temple An Epitome of Hindu Culture

—*G Venkataramana Reddy* ... .. 515

Awakening India —*Swami Vivekananda* ... .. 660

Bhartṛhari: Language, Thought and Reality —*Ed. Mithilesh Chaturvedi* ... .. 273

Brahmananda as We Saw Him, Swami

—*Comp. and Ed. Swami Atmashraddhananda* ... .. 322

Celebrating Shri Ramakrishna: Essays for the 175th Birth Anniversary of

Shri Ramakrishna —*Swami Tathagatananda* ... .. 371

Country of the Soul: An English Translation of Bimla Raina's Kashmiri Verses

—*A N Dhar* ... .. 417



Dharma: Studies in its Semantic, Cultural and Religious History	
—Ed. Patrick Olivelle ... ..	467
Doctrine of Bhakti in Vāllabha Vedānta, The —K Narain ... ..	227
Encyclopedia of Kashmiri Pandit Culture and Heritage —C L Kaul ... ..	274
End of Empires: African Americans and Indians, The —Gerald Horne ... ..	612
Enlightenment —Sirshree ... ..	324
Hinduism: Triumphs and Tribulations —S K Kulkarni ... ..	418
Holy Mother, Swamiji, and Direct Disciples at Madras	
—Ramakrishna Math, Chennai ... ..	419
How to Organize Life? A Vedanta Kesari Presentation	
—Ramakrishna Math, Chennai ... ..	466
India-China Border: A Reappraisal, The —Gondker Narayana Rao ... ..	273
Interpreting Ramakrishna: Kali's Child Revisited	
—Swami Tyagananda, Pravrajika Vrajaprana ... ..	224
Linguistic Atom and the Origin of Language, The —Gouri Dharmapal ... ..	705
Mahendra Nath Gupta (M.): The Recorder of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	
—Swami Chetanananda ... ..	606
Management Mantras —S Ramaratnam ... ..	659
Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists, and the Art of the Self	
—Anne Carolyn Klein ... ..	416
Old Man and His Soul, The —Farida Sharan ... ..	705
Origin and Nature of Ancient Indian Buddhism —Dr K T S Sarao ... ..	563
Philosophy in Classical India: The Proper Work of Reason —Jonardon Ganeri ... ..	323
Practical Wisdom —Svami Purna ... ..	372
Ramakrishna Charitam, Sri —K Ramakrishna Warriar ... ..	707
Reforming Vaishno Devi —Jagmohan ... ..	465
Relaxing into Meditation —Ngakma Nor'dzin ... ..	612
Science, Philosophy and Religion: Towards a Synthesis —Ramakrishna Srinivasan ... ..	611
Secret of the Creative Vacuum, The —John Davidson ... ..	275
Teachers are Sculptors —J P Vaswani ... ..	418
Tibetan Treasure Literature: Revelation, Tradition, and	
Accomplishment in Visionary Buddhism —Andreas Doctor ... ..	321
Towards The Goal —Mrs Vandana Sarathy, Dr Rajeev Ramakrishna ... ..	228
Unfolding The Mindfield: Experiences of a Spiritual Entrepreneur	
—Madhav Kamat ... ..	276
Universal Hinduism: Towards a New Vision of Sanatana Dharma	
—Vamadeva Shastri (David Frawley) ... ..	467
Varanasi at the Crossroads —Swami Medhasananda ... ..	756
Vedanta: A Religion, a Philosophy, a Way of Life —Swami Atmarupananda ... ..	563
Vedic Life: The Practical Philosophy of Nature, A —Pawan Kanwar ... ..	755
War on Sacred Grounds —Ron E Hassner ... ..	564

## Wittgensteinian Philosophy and Advaita Vedānta: A Survey of the Parallels

— <i>Ravindra K S Choudhary</i> ... ..	464
Yogi of Walden: Henry David Thoreau, The — <i>Sundara Bharadwaj</i> ... ..	515
You Can Make a Difference — <i>J P Vaswani</i> ... ..	755

## **List of Reviewers**

Acharya, Dr Suchitra Ray ... ..	707
Bhat, Prof. Rajnath ... ..	273
Bhattacharyya, Anuradha ... ..	660
Chattopadhyay, Subhasis ... ..	516
Chaudhri, Prof. D P ... ..	276
Ingalalli, Dr R I ... ..	468
Maitra, Chaitali ... ..	323, 756
Malik, Prof. S C ... ..	418, 467
Mandavia, Dr Chetana ... ..	705
Mazumder, Kamalika ... ..	755
Mishra, Keshav ... ..	274
Nandakumar, Prema ... ..	228, 417, 466
Narasimhananda, Swami ... ..	228, 275, 419, 467
Øvland, Mark ... ..	324
Pathak, Prof. Sunitikumar ... ..	322
Patil, N B ... ..	563
<i>PB</i> ... ..	564, 612, 756
Putatunda, Nileen ... ..	612
Shuddhatmaprana, Pravrajika ... ..	372
Sivaramkrishna, Dr M ... ..	227, 418, 465, 606, 707
Sundaram, P S ... ..	659
Swamy, Dr N V C ... ..	276, 324
Tattwajnanananda, Swami ... ..	515
Vedapurushananda, Swami ... ..	372, 419
Vidyachaitanya, Brahmachari ... ..	611

**Managing Editor: Swami Bodhasarananda**

**Editor: Swami Satyamayananda**

## Attention Prabuddha Bharata Subscribers

- With the January 2012 special issue on **Envisioning India** your journal Prabuddha Bharata will enter its 117th year.
- The **Envisioning India** number will include inspiring articles written by contributors from various fields.
- We request all readers whose subscriptions end in December 2011 to renew the subscriptions at the earliest.
- You can upgrade your account to **Life** or **Patron** by paying the difference.
- You can also renew your subscription online, at [www.advaitaashrama.org](http://www.advaitaashrama.org).
- A gift subscription of **Prabuddha Bharata** is a wonderful way to introduce your near and dear to Indian culture and values. Gift a subscription to your relatives, friends, or colleagues, or sponsor a subscription for the school, college, or university you studied in.

## With you we grow ...

The subscribers of *Prabuddha Bharata* form an extended family. We want to bring all your friends and relatives into this fold. Will you not help us achieve this? Come, join hands and bring all your friends to practical Vedanta.

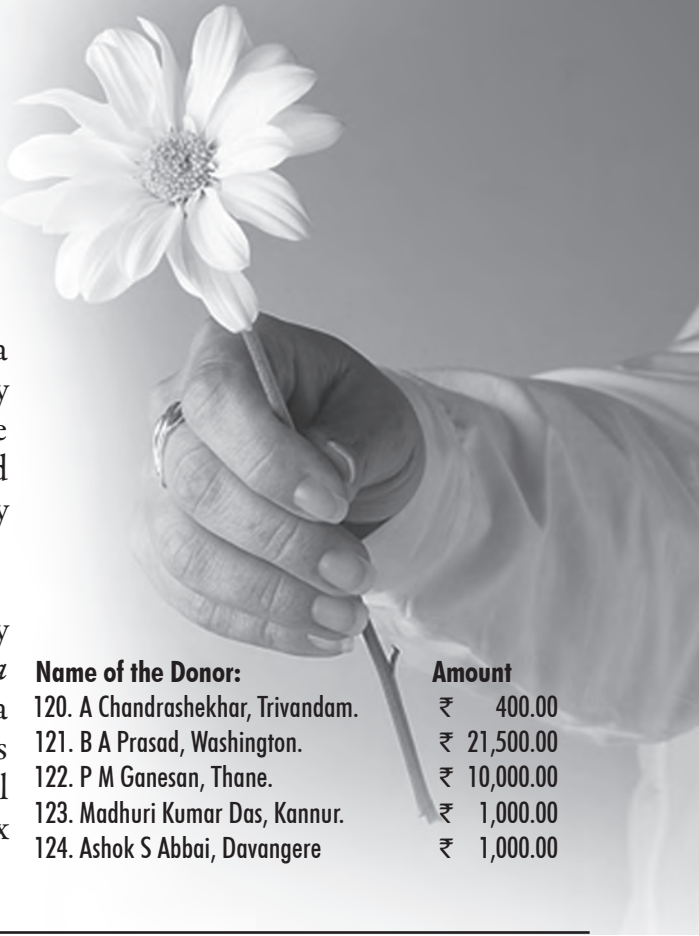
Let us fulfil the grand vision of Swami Vivekananda, to spread this life-giving message among the masses. Gift or recommend *Prabuddha Bharata* to your near and dear.



## CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRABUDDHA BHARATA CORPUS FUND!

Contribute your mite to the Prabuddha Bharata Corpus Fund and actively participate in this venture to propagate Indian culture, values, philosophy, and spirituality. Could there be a better way to show your appreciation?

You can send your contributions by cheque or drafts favouring 'Prabuddha Bharata' to 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700014, India or make your donations online at [www.advaitaashrama.org](http://www.advaitaashrama.org). All donations are exempt from Income tax under section 80G.

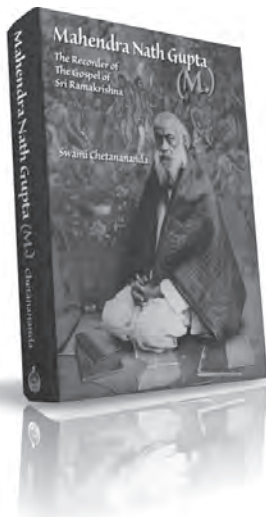


### Name of the Donor:

- 120. A Chandrashekhhar, Trivandam.
- 121. B A Prasad, Washington.
- 122. P M Ganesan, Thane.
- 123. Madhuri Kumar Das, Kannur.
- 124. Ashok S Abbai, Davangere

### Amount

- ₹ 400.00
- ₹ 21,500.00
- ₹ 10,000.00
- ₹ 1,000.00
- ₹ 1,000.00



## MAHENDRA NATH GUPTA (M.)

by Swami Chetanananda

This is a biography of the biographer of Sri Ramakrishna, Mahendra Nath Gupta, the self-effacing author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* who craved no accolades, at last emerges from the shadows. Burdened with financial obligations and continuous family discord, Gupta became nearly suicidal. Grace and desperation led him to Ramakrishna, the unconventional temple priest at Dakshineswar who became his guru. By the close of his life Gupta was recognized as a saint in his own right, his life transmuted by the spiritual master whose activities he observed so closely and reported so vividly.

Pages: 594 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 50 | Price: ₹ 200



Please write to:

**ADVAITA ASHRAMA, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India**

Phones: 91-33-22644000 / 22640898 / 22866483, E-mail: [mail@advaitaashrama.org](mailto:mail@advaitaashrama.org)